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LOST LONDON

EX-DETECTIVE-SERGEANT

B. LEESON

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LOST LONDON

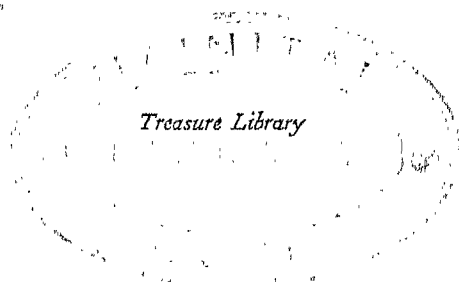


EX-DET. SERGEANT B. LEESON

LOST LONDON

*THE MEMOIRS OF AN
EAST END DETECTIVE*

By
EX-DET. SERGEANT B. LEESON



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DEDICATED
TO MY BELOVED SON
ALBERT EDWARD LEESON
KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE
ON OR ABOUT HIS EIGHTEENTH BIRTHDAY
PEACE BE WITH YOU

PREFACE

IN writing the story of my career in the Police Force, I should like to make it clear that although I have had to draw largely on memory for my notes, yet everything I have set down refers to facts and instances in which I was personally interested or actually engaged.

Many times I have been invited to relate my experiences, but I have not felt inclined to do so until the retirement of Chief Constable Wensley, C.I.D.—rightly described as the “World’s Greatest Detective,” and with whom I did duty during practically the whole of my career—animated me with the desire to put in writing some record of the work we did together.

Fate might easily have reversed our lives, at least I might have reached the rank of Superintendent. However, *tempus omnia revelat*, and whilst my time in the service was cut short, Mr. Wensley continued on from Inspector to be the first Chief Constable of the Criminal Investigation Department who has risen to that position from the ranks.

I haven’t the remotest idea what first made me think of becoming a policeman, but candidly I found the job suited me, and my great regret is that I was compelled, through no fault of my own, to leave the Force long before I was ready to go, and I can honestly recommend it as a splendid career to any young man.

During my twenty years’ service I received one hundred rewards and commendations from judges, magistrates, coroners, and the Commissioner of Police for courage, ability, and action in arresting persons for every offence mentioned in the Criminal Code.

These, however, were not the only instances in which my actions received acknowledgment. For instance, for saving a woman from drowning I was awarded four hours’ relief from duty for the purpose of drying my uniform, whilst on another occasion after stopping a runaway horse, I had to pay 1s. 6d. for damages to my tunic, and received

in addition a "telling off" by a very disgruntled inspector, who told me to *run* after a horse in future instead of getting between its legs.

On another occasion, worthy perhaps of note, I won a wager for entering a lion's den containing two lions that had badly mauled their trainer the previous night. The result was £5, which I handed to Mr. (now Sir) Harry Preston, of Brighton, from whom I received a letter of congratulation, and an acknowledgment from the Brighton Sussex Hospital, thanking me and wishing me success in the future; but as one rarely does this sort of thing more than once my future in that direction was not worthy of note.

Yet another life-saving (from fire this time) will always remain in my memory, for it was my wife and two young women whose lives were in danger.

We were in the Ship Hotel, Newhaven, when it was discovered that the building was on fire, and the flames fast making their way up the staircase, cutting off the only apparent means of escape.

Two o'clock in the morning, with no fire-alarm, and no person in the vicinity to give the signal to the fire-brigade (a voluntary one), was quite sufficient to make one do some quick thinking.

Taking the women to the top room overlooking the street, I stripped the clothes from the bed, dipped them in the water-jug (for the flames were coming from the windows below), and knotting them together into a rope just long enough to reach the footway, I lowered the three women to safety, my wife, incidentally, insisting on going last. Then securing the clothes to the bed post, I slid down to the street just in time to beat the firemen. None of us were injured.

In conclusion, amongst the many prizes I have received there was once a cricket bat and ball. They have long since been lost, but I hope even in the difficult calling to which I belonged, that I was never guilty of any action of which anyone could say "It wasn't cricket!"

B. LEESON.

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LOST LONDON

CHAPTER I

I START MY CAREER

Home—School—Early occupation—I become a policeman—My father's wish.

I WAS born in the country, but I was brought to London at such an early age that I have always looked on the great city as the "place of my nativity," and it was in London, too, that I received all the schooling my father could afford to give me—not very much, but sufficient to make my life, if I may say so, reasonably successful.

My father, who, by the way, was himself a policeman, was a big man over six foot in height and weighing some sixteen stone. He was a good amateur boxer, and taught me one thing that was to be of inestimable value to me in after life: the use of a good "straight left." He was a good musician, too, playing several instruments, and in his spare time conducting a little orchestra which used to practise in our back kitchen. It is to this, I suppose, I may ascribe my love of music—but only as a listener. As a performer, I was always distinctly mediocre.

St. Mark's and St. Saviour's, Chelsea, were the two schools to have the doubtful privilege of initiating me into the mysteries of the "three R's."

I disliked them, all three, and though I did occasionally reach the top of the class for drawing and geometry, two subjects at which I was rather good, I always came down with a bump the next day, owing to my being late. Somehow or other I was nearly always late. School routine was pretty arduous in those days. Apart from the "gym." there was no recreation at all—no games—all work and no play in fact.

St. Saviour's overlooked what was then the famous Prince's Club and Grounds (Lennox Gardens now stand on the site), and from the school we could watch the play and players. So fascinating a thing, to me at all events, that I was more often to be found sitting on the playground wall, taking it all in, than sitting in the classroom at my lessons, taking *them* all in, as I should have been doing. I used to think how wonderful it would be if only I were old enough to bowl to the gentlemen, and play tennis as the groundsmen did, and being a big chap for my age I felt confident that I could do anything they did, and equally well.

The feeling so grew on me, that one day after our so-called "playtime," one boy was missing when the rest of the class returned to the schoolroom. Yes, Young Leeson was the boy.

I had decided without announcing my intentions to anyone (knowing full well what would happen to them if I did) to strike out for myself, and so, when the others went back to school, and minus my hat, I dropped from the wall into the cricket field and made my way to a group of players and groundsmen.

"Can you please tell me where I have to apply for a job like yours?" I asked.

A burst of laughter was the only answer I got, supplemented by the advice that I'd better nip back to school sharp before I got my butt-end tanned. Only it was not put exactly in those words.

Seeing, however, that I stood my ground, one of the men offered to take me to the head groundsman, and I went with him to the lodge house. He left me at the gates, after informing me (with the object doubtless of putting me off) that I would certainly get my ears boxed if I dared to knock at the door. Anyway, I *did* knock, and I shall never forget the look of surprise that passed over the face of the big man who opened the door, when I told him I was seeking employment.

"Where's your hat?" was the first thing he said, and then, before I could answer, "How old are you?"

My heart sank into my boots, so I answered all in one breath, "I'm twelve and a half, but I'm bigger than some of your boys and I can do anything they can."

He laughed, and asked me if I thought I could bowl a

ball the full length of the wicket. I replied that I had no doubt about it whatever. Was I not the best bowler in our street club?

Something about me must have impressed the man, for he took me straight to the wickets where a few minutes before I had been speaking to the men. Tossing a cricket ball to me, and picking up a bat himself, he walked to the stumps and said briefly: "See what you can do."

The ball seemed much bigger and heavier than any I had ever used before, more like a football in fact. Determined to "have a go," however, I sent down quite a good length ball, which to my own dismay and to the great amusement of the onlookers the man hit right out of the ground. I was turning away in despair, when to my surprise, the groundsman said: "Not at all bad—try again."

This was encouraging, and to my great amazement (doubtless to his, too) my next ball went clean off his legs and took his off stump.

I have had many thrills in my life, but I don't think I have ever experienced a greater one than when I saw that off "peg" flying.

I never managed to get that groundsman's wicket again, but he was so satisfied with me that he wrote a letter to my schoolmaster saying he was quite prepared to offer me a job, provided it didn't interfere with my education. With my precious letter in my hand I hastened back to school, quite forgetting that having got *out* by jumping over the wall I could only get *in* the same way, the gates of course being closed.

However, I managed it, and suddenly appeared in the classroom, to the great surprise of my teacher, who, it appeared, had not only searched the whole school for me, but had even sent to my home, which was quite near, to see if I had been there.

In answer to his very natural inquiry as to where I had been, I suggested, most improperly, that he'd better read my letter first, with the result that I was immediately rushed off to the head master, who without further ceremony prescribed four cuts with the cane.

Sentence was duly carried out.

I remember as if it were yesterday how I rushed home that dinner hour, still clutching my letter, and finding my

dear mother in a state of alarm, caused, of course, by the messenger from the school reporting my sudden disappearance. I soon allayed her fears, and, explaining everything that had happened, begged her to persuade my father to let me take the job at the cricket field, pointing out how useful my wages would be to her.

My mother, bless her, was all for helping me, but was fearful as to what my father would say.

With quick decision she sat down and wrote letters both to my master and to the groundsman, and then, after a hurried meal together, we went back to the school.

My master was now in a more reasonable state of mind, and after reading my letter, listened attentively to what my mother had to say. He finally agreed to my leaving the school, conditionally on my sitting there for the Government inspector's examination.

The reason for the condition was that, in those days, if you passed the examination the master received some sort of a grant. This, of course, has long since been done away with.

However, the upshot of it all was that, my father consenting, I became a full-blown groundsman (aged 12½) at "Prince's," where I quickly acquired a good working knowledge of both cricket and lawn-tennis, and even at that age played with members of the club. Everything went well until the end of my first season, when my engagement came to an abrupt termination.

That "straight left" which I have already mentioned, and which so often proved invaluable to me later in life, was on this occasion the cause of my undoing. I had a "spot of bother" with the manager's son, and by the time I had finished with him he could have sung Charles Coborn's famous song with very great conviction. Very thrilling—but I was out of a job.

My next place was at a desk at what was then (and for that matter, still is) one of the largest stores in London, where I remained until my parents put me with an electrical engineering firm at Woolwich, which, by the way, took me from home for the first time.

But I was restless and dissatisfied. I was a very big chap by now—just on six foot—and it was now that I began to think seriously of becoming a policeman.

My father was still a member of the Force, and a very

well-known one, too, having been concerned in some important cases, amongst others being that of Mrs. Pleasants, whom he arrested for the murder of her four children, whom she mutilated and threw into the Thames.

I would like to mention here that I once went to my father's assistance when he was struggling with a man who was in possession of stolen property. All I got for my pains was a jolly good hiding at the time, and a cutting rebuke later from my father, who told me it would be a very good thing if I minded my own business, as he was quite capable of looking after himself.

My father was strongly opposed to the idea of my joining the Force, and I gravely suspect that it was due to him that no less than three of my application forms "went astray." However, one got through eventually, and having successfully passed my examination, I became a fully-fledged P.C.

To my great joy I was posted to "H" division, which meant—Whitechapel. The dread of most young constables, it was my father's wish. "If ever you *do* join the Force," he once said, "I hope they send you to Whitechapel. It will make a policeman of you."

And it did!

CHAPTER II

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Great Scotland Yard—Kennington Section House—Humours of the drill-ground—Scotland Yard again—"Form fours and gallop"—I am posted to Whitechapel—First impressions of the East End—My new home—Début as a policeman and arrest without authority—Whitechapel Church—Brandon, the Executioner.

GREAT SCOTLAND YARD, or, as it is known to many, Old Scotland Yard, has been the Headquarters of the Metropolitan Police Force since that body was first formed at the instance of Sir Robert Peel.

I expect I do not need to remind my readers that it is because of their founder's name that policemen are often called "peelers." The "Yard" has really a very interesting history, as it was originally the London residence used by Scottish monarchs on their visits to the metropolis—hence the name Scotland Yard. The last member of the Scottish Royal Family to stay at the Yard was Queen Margaret, sister to King Henry VIII.

I was first called to the Yard to be educationally and medically examined in October, 1890. The educational test was a very easy affair in those days, yet for all that quite a number of the men in my batch failed to satisfy the examiners. The medical scrutiny, however, was quite another matter, and very few indeed survived it. I was amazed to see the number of apparently fine specimens of manhood rejected.

I was fortunate enough to pass both tests, and in due course—December of the same year to be exact—I was again ordered to report at the Yard. From there I was taken with the other successful applicants to Kennington Lane Section House, which at that time was a sort of barracks and school of instruction where budding P.C.s had to undergo a course which varied from three to five weeks.

There were very few facilities for learning at this place;

in fact, apart from a set of telegraph instruments, forming what was known as the "A B C" system, there were none at all. I may mention that in those days telegraphy was the principal means of effecting rapid communication, the telephone not being adopted till some years later.

Every morning after breakfast we made our way to Wellington Barracks, and there on the Guards' drill-ground we were put through a very tiring two hours a day drill, much to the amusement of the guardsmen and civilian onlookers. We were a mixed lot, farm labourers, ploughmen, waggoners, and the like from every county in the British Isles.

All of us clumsy, and made to look more so than we actually were by a few ex-soldiers who were among our ranks. There were three squads with three instructors, and how on earth these latter managed to qualify for the jobs I really do not know. Their knowledge of drill was not much better than our own. One of these instructors was dreadfully cross-eyed, and whether it was due to his affliction or not I don't know, but whenever he started his "left right, left right," he was always wrong; we were always on the wrong foot!

Not knowing our names, and invariably forgetting how we had numbered off, this man would usually address us in this fashion:

"Now then, you with the velvet collar on yer coat" (me, by the way), "what d'yer think you're a doing of?" and "Hi, you, without a coat, I'll learn you that you ain't pushin' a plough no more."

I remember one extremely funny incident in connection with this man, though it nearly had the tragic termination of getting one of our number dismissed the Force, almost before he was properly in it.

Owing to his cross-eyes, we used to call this instructor "boss" (privately, of course, that is). Our simple recruit, thinking that he had earned that title because of being in charge of the squad, addressed him one day as "boss" on parade!

One more story before I take leave of the drill-ground.

One Monday morning there was a Scotsman among the recruits. He walked on to the parade-ground in full Highland regalia—kilts and feathered bonnet complete. He was immediately spotted by the sergeant, who told him to clear

off and get a suit of clothes, and two of us, of whom I was one, were told off to go and help him.

We took him to a tailor in the Westminster Bridge Road. Asked there if he wanted a pair of trousers, he replied, "No, I only want *one*." The pair we selected for him, which incidentally cost 7s. 11d., fitted him literally "like a glove." How he ever managed to pull them on I don't know. To these we added a hard brimmed hat complete with string, hat-guard, and a huge bone horseshoe buckle, and a large heavy pair of nailed boots.

Thus accoutred we trotted him back to the parade-ground where he was immediately dubbed "hat, tights, and running pumps," an appellation which stuck to him for years. He lived to wear it down, however, and, as a matter of fact, eventually attained a position of importance in the Service.

I spent my first Christmas in the Force at Kennington, and incidentally came near to being dismissed for what was described as "refractory conduct." I was one of a party indulging in a "rag" after "lights out."

A sergeant came into the dormitory, and, not knowing who he was, we promptly "bolstered" him, his appeals and threats to report us only resulting in a renewed walloping.

Well, report us he did, and it must have been something of a record in the way of a report, as no less than nine of us were "on the sheet" for disregarding the regulations.

The sergeant, however, was not very popular, and, failing to produce the regulations (which honestly I don't think ever existed in writing), he lost his case, the officer in charge telling him he should make allowances for the festive season.

Strictly on our best behaviour after this, we kept clear of further trouble until the day of "posting," when fifty-four of us marched to New Scotland Yard. I may mention that a few of us, myself amongst the number, had the unique experience of joining the Police at both Old and New Scotland Yard, for we were candidates at the one, and sworn in at the other.

We assembled on the parade-ground, and, being now fairly well disciplined, quickly jumped to the command of "fall in."

"That's the colonel," said someone, as a very burly-

looking man with an " Old Bill " moustache came on to the ground and started lecturing us on the evils of drink. From his appearance I should say he was an authority on the subject.

He told us that the majority of us would remain at Whitehall, as more men would be required there in readiness for the opening of the Houses of Parliament, an important duty that would bring us under the notice of members of the House.

" Attention! Number! " came the words of command. I was No. 4, so quite expected to be detailed by the colonel for duty somewhere around the entrance to the House; but then an extraordinary thing happened. The colonel must have been a cavalryman, for he now shouted, " Fours about and gallop." Nobody had the vaguest idea what this meant, and we all tried to do it at the same time. When we came back to earth, I found that in the mêlée I had somehow become No. 13!

However, " posting " commenced, and the first twelve men were sent to " A " division, Whitehall. Then pointing to me, the colonel said, " ' H ' division, Whitechapel." I was the only one, and thus as I have already told you, my father's wish was fulfilled and I was sent to the place where " they made a policeman of you."

There were plenty of uniforms, each of us having two complete outfits. The material of these was good, but they were poorly made and ill-fitting; no padding, and in some cases no lining either; so bad in fact, that by holding the uniform to the light you could see between the seams.

And the boots! Convict-made, and instruments of torture. You were required to take them two sizes too large for you, in order to make room for the toes. Can you wonder that a P.C. was known as " flatfoot " ?

The excitement of posting and parting with the friends I had made at Kennington having subsided, I began to think, just a little apprehensively at first, about my immediate future, as my leg had been most mercilessly pulled about the things that constantly happened in the district to which I was going.

About that time the " Jack the Ripper " crimes were the talk of England, and, as you doubtless know, these crimes all took place in the neighbourhood which henceforward was to be my home and the scene of my new duties.

However, I had not long to wait, as a shout from a tall, finely built man wearing four stripes called me to attention. I soon pulled myself together and endeavoured to forget for the moment the unsavoury reputation of my destination. My mentor was a kindly sort of chap, and speaking most encouragingly to me, quickly put me at my ease.

He had spent all his time in the East End, he told me, and having attained the rank of divisional clerk, it was one of his duties to fetch recruits from the Yard to the White-chapel division. He assured me that all the new men did very well there, and very soon began to like the place. Information which, as you may imagine, heartened me very considerably.

Into an old-fashioned horse-drawn cab, or "growler," we tumbled, and with my luggage and uniform on top, drove along the Embankment, where a most ludicrous incident occurred. As we were bowling along we heard a voice shout

"Hi, copper, you've dropped your 'at."

"Get out and get it," said the sergeant.

I got out and was just in time to see the wheels of a brewer's dray pass over my spare helmet. I was dreadfully worried about it, but the sergeant only laughed.

"That'll soon be put right," he said. "You be thankful your head wasn't in it."

We continued without further mishap till we arrived at our destination, Leman Street Police Station—then only a temporary structure, the present one not having yet been built.

Let me say at once that a more frowsy and dismal-looking building I have never seen, and its gloomy interior matched the outside perfectly. At the moment of our arrival, two drunken creatures in the guise of women were being dragged into the station from the police ambulance.

This possibly distracted the attention of those present from the more important fact of my arrival. At all events no fanfare of trumpets announced the advent of so interesting an augmentation to the division.

As a matter of fact, I sat for a long time on my belongings after the departure of my friendly sergeant, till at last an inspector, a genial old Irishman, came in and asked if I was the new recruit. On learning that I was, he called a

constable and told him to take me to Prince's Square, St. George's in the East.

It did not escape my notice that on receipt of these instructions the constable grinned to the others standing round, and I began to wonder what was in store for me.

"Come along, youngster," he said, "get your kit and we'll get along. There'll be plenty of room for you at the place I'm taking you to, because out of the four chaps who used to stay there, two got murdered last week. Yes," he went on, "the chap that did it only got three months, on a charge of spoiling a policeman's uniform. Magistrate said it didn't matter so much about the copper, as there were plenty more waiting for the job."

Whilst talking, we were making our way through a network of evil-smelling and dirt-encrusted alleys and courts, and mean-looking, poorly-lit streets. A quite unnecessary route I found afterwards, but all done with a purpose, just as his good-humoured leg-pulling was; the purpose being, of course, to put me on my mettle, and give me a taste of some of the things I might have to encounter.

Eventually we arrived at 26 Prince's Square, which was to be my new home, and where I was joined later by P.C. Fred Wensley, who afterwards rose to the rank of Chief Constable of the C.I.D., and as such was destined to become world famous.

I was shown to my room, which was somewhere about ten foot by nine, and whose only window looked out on a small yard full of rabbit-hutches. It was elegantly furnished with two army cots and a chair. Whilst I was having a look round, my future house-mates were evidently being well primed by the constable who had brought me along, and it was not long before I again heard the story of the murdered policeman from the two men who occupied the room adjoining mine. They also told me how they had both been assaulted in a neighbouring court named Shovel Alley, which was so called because it was chiefly inhabited by "coalies," who fought and killed people with their shovels.

My guide having gone without me, I thought I would try to find my way back to Leman Street by myself, but before going very far I was completely lost, and discovered to my surprise that I had actually wandered into the notorious Shovel Alley itself, a dirty, ill-lit court of about twenty houses, or rather, I should say, hovels.

Much against my will, I was compelled to ask my way, which immediately brought down on my head a torrent of more or less good-natured abuse, such as "copper lost his way," "do him in," "we kill all coppers who come down this street," and so forth.

I had barely left the alley when I was startled by the sound of a police whistle. For the moment I stood stock-still, but was brought to my senses by a shout of "Go on, why don't yer run? . . . One of yer mates is in trouble. What's the matter with yer . . . afraid? "

Before I knew where I was, I found myself running as fast as my legs would carry me in the direction from which the sound came. After running for several hundred yards, I came abruptly into the lights of what I learned later to be the "Sun and Sword" public-house, to be immediately greeted with derisive shouts of "Don't bother about 'im, 'e ain't no copper. He ain't got no number." And this was true, it was something I had missed at Scotland Yard.

"Come on," yelled the crowd, "it's Joanna, she'll kill you."

Without knowing quite how it happened, I found myself one of three struggling on the footway. I wasn't even certain who was the actual offender, but Joanna quickly supplied me with the information by knocking my helmet off, clawing my face, and behaving like a madwoman generally.

The man with whom she had been struggling, and who evidently knew her well, was the landlord of the public-house, but from the time of my arrival took no further part in the conflict, except to stand by and abuse me for not being there when I was wanted.

I was still rolling about on the ground with Joanna, wondering what was the next thing to be done, when I heard a voice say, "That's right, my boy, you're sure making a name for yourself."

Looking up, I saw two constables, who took my prisoner in hand, whilst I went to rescue my helmet, which by this time was being used by a crowd of boys as a football.

It was thus that I made my first arrest within a few hours of leaving Scotland Yard, and this, too, without authority, for not having been given a number it was very doubtful if I had been properly sworn in.

As my story is written and centres mainly about matters

concerning Whitechapel, it may not, perhaps, be irrelevant if I say something about the history of this interesting and bizarre locality.

St. Mary's Parish Church, Whitechapel, is situate about two hundred yards east of the City of London boundary, at the beginning of what is now called Whitechapel Road. The church was formerly a chapel of ease and rest for people making their way to Stepney, where there was a house of religious meeting. The chapel dates back to 1329, and is believed to have been called White Chapel because of the large quantity of whitewash used by the builders in those days.

There have been several churches between that first church and the present one, some having been destroyed by fire. The register of St. Mary's bears the record of Brandon—supposed executioner of Charles I. Brandon was a ragman of Rosemary Lane (now Royal Mint Street).

According to the record, he is supposed to have confessed to having been the executioner, and to have received £30—all in half-crowns—for his work within half an hour of the time when the axe fell. He robbed the body of a handkerchief and an orange stuck with cloves, and later appears to have been seen endeavouring to sell the gruesome relics in Whitehall, but being unsuccessful eventually returned to Rosemary Lane, and sold them there for 10s.

At the time when John Stow was writing his history of London, all the land stretching from Whitechapel to Stepney was meadow and pasture land, abounding with cattle. But much anxiety was caused to the authorities of the day by the influx of people from the City, who, building their mean alleys and meaner houses, brought crime and poverty with them in their train.

CHAPTER III

" BEATING " THE BOUNDARIES

Learning the "beats"—Boundaries of the City and Metropolitan courts—An amusing episode on the boundary—Police courts and magistrates—Uniform experiences—The "Jolly Sailors"—First use of my truncheon—Cornelius Hogan—24s. a week—Dismissal of my two chums—Burglary epidemic—On the use of cotton, "Tommy Upright," "Chinaman," and the "Masher" of the C.I.D.—A van-load of watches—"Rashers"—"Shop-dragging"—The ex-C.I.D. man and his watch—Wapping Island.

IN my early days, a fortnight's attendance at a police court and a couple of hours' instruction from the Chief Inspector was considered quite adequate for the making of a policeman. For the rest, he had to learn from personal experience, and for this no better place could be found than the East End division to which I was attached.

Learning the beats was one of the first things of importance in a young constable's education, particularly so in our district, since it adjoined the City of London division, which is policed by an independent body.

Divisions are divided into sections, and sections into beats, and as each man is responsible for his section it is most necessary that he should know the dividing line, especially as daytime sections are not the same as those that obtain at night.

Much difficulty is caused in the City, as in the case of arrest for crime the exact parish or hamlet must be shown in the indictment, the City authorities being always on the alert to see that they are not saddled with the responsibility and expense of an arrest that should be borne by another district.

As an instance of this, I will relate an amusing little episode which came under my notice when I had been in the Force some years, and which occurred while I was keeping observation in the vicinity of the City boundary. I was keeping well out of view, as I was on the track of

two dangerous criminals who had pestered the district for some time, and whom I was hoping to bring to justice.

It was about two o'clock in the morning, when from my hiding-place I saw two uniformed constables carrying what appeared to be a heavy bundle from one side of the road to the other. When they got on the further side they gently laid the bundle down, and then hurried back to the spot from which they had brought it. Watching very intently, for I thought it might possibly be connected with the matter in which I was concerned, I thought I saw the bundle move.

I didn't have long to wait for confirmation of my belief, as another policeman arrived, and as he gently pushed the bundle with his foot, there emanated from it as fine a flow of “ best Whitechapel ” as I have ever heard. It was a woman, and failing to get her on her feet, the officer quietly disappeared, and presently returned with another.

The two then lifted her up and were half-way back across the road, when a voice called out: “ No you don't, you take her back on your own side.” The first two policemen, who were members of “ H ” division, now came into view, and, with all the cheek and temerity possible, threatened to report the other two—who were, of course, City men—if they didn't take the woman back. There looked like being trouble at first, but cheek won and the two City men retired discomfited with their undeserved “ drunk.”

I should perhaps mention, since it helps to explain matters, that in the City “ drunks ” are allowed to go when they are sober, whilst in the Metropolitan area the officer making the arrest has to charge them and attend court, thus losing his rest.

Even between division and division, police court and police court there is the same anxiety not to be burdened with somebody else's troubles. In the City, all cases are taken to Guildhall or the Mansion House, but Thames Police Court officials, for instance, take very good care that they don't have to try cases which should have gone to Old Street, and, of course, vice versa.

Magistrates, being only human, are of course very “ whimsy,” some more so than others, and it is only natural that a constable making an arrest will try to get his case heard by the one who is least faddy. Not that I have a word to say against our magistrates. Personally

I think the London Stipendiary to be the best and most human of all judges.

Pay a visit to a London police court, Thames Court, Arbour Square, E., for instance, and try to put yourself in the position of the magistrate dealing with the prisoner in the dock.

Think of the tremendous variety of cases in which he has to make a decision. How would *you* deal with this one—or that?

First perhaps he has to listen to a wife whose husband has insulted or assaulted her (or vice versa), then to a landlord who wants a tenant ejected, or to a woman who wants a summons against her neighbour who has accused her of being a woman of immoral character.

"I want to make her prove it," shouts the applicant. Watch her face when the magistrate suggests—as tactfully as possible—that perhaps it would be better if she didn't. He knows!

Then there are the hundred and one cases of drunkenness, assault, prostitution, petty and other cases of theft; old offenders, first offenders—all mixed up. Here is one whom you would feel sorry for, whereas he is undeserving of any pity at all. Another your inexperience would send to prison, and you are surprised when he is only "bound over." The man on the Bench has to dispense not only Law, but Justice, not always the same thing as we know. Being human, magistrates err, of course, but it is invariably the man or woman in the dock who gets the benefit of any error.

For myself, with a long experience of attendance before both judges and magistrates, I have never had any real cause for complaint, either in their treatment of me, or in their administration of Justice in the cases in which I have been concerned.

I have wandered rather out of my course, however, and must return to my "beats."

Learning these and attending police courts was not allowed to take up too much of my time, and my third Sunday in the Force saw me working a beat, to all intents and purposes a fully qualified "bobby." How different now, and how we knock off the rough edges for the present-day policeman. However, I was glad to begin proper duty. I was anxious to become a detective, but this you couldn't

be without serving as a uniformed officer first, and it was necessary that you should show some aptitude and ability for detective work before you could hope to be recommended for duty in the C.I.D.

After my first few days I was posted to a beat in the neighbourhood of the London Docks—some place for a beginner! I soon got my first call, a woman rushing up to me and saying: " You're wanted at the ' Jolly Sailor.' " I presumed this was a " pub," but I hadn't the vaguest idea where it was, and I didn't want to give away the fact that I was a novice, as I had already heard " what we do with young coppers down this way."

However, the woman volunteered to lead the way, and following her we soon arrived at the " Jolly Sailor." It didn't look very jolly outside, but inside was a different matter, for I had never seen a jollier lot of sailors than those assembled there.

" That's the man," said the landlord, pointing to one jolly mariner. " I want him out." There was a general laugh, and one of them called out: " Go on, ' flatty,' don't be afraid of him." I wasn't afraid, and, approaching the man, took him by the arm in the manner laid down in instructions.

A moment later I was lifted up bodily and thrown over the counter, where I fell heavily on the landlord, the sailors treating the whole thing as a huge joke, and making no attempt to leave. Scrambling back, I again attempted to remove the man, and got such a firm hold on him that we both fell to the floor. Here we indulged in a " slow motion " wrestling match, the floor space being so small that it was impossible to get up again without assistance.

This arrived in the shape of my section sergeant, whose stripes seemed to have some effect on the man—for the moment, that is. " Why don't you use your ' stick ' ? " said the sergeant. " What d'yer think it's for? " With that he drew his truncheon and tapped the sailor on the head. In a moment the whole lot set on us, and it was then that I used my truncheon for the first time, and effectively, too.

The sergeant's truncheon was snatched from him, and used *on* him. He was in a terrible plight when further assistance arrived. It taught me a lesson, and from that time on I was always careful how I used my " stick."

The sailors were arrested, and after a remand, sent to the naval barracks. I attended the court martial and understood that the prisoners were to be sent to the East African coast, on a vessel about to leave for a station there. This, so I was told, was a much worse punishment than imprisonment. What it all meant I never quite knew, but certain it is that I met two of them in London a fortnight later.

They bore me no malice. "You know what sailors are," they said, and asked me to go and have a drink with them. I went.

My next call—only a week or so later—was to a butcher's shop in Wapping, where I made the acquaintance of a well-known character named Cornelius Hogan. I had never heard of this notorious personage, but it was soon evident that he was of some importance. I found him on the floor of the shop in what was almost a death struggle with the proprietor. The latter was a giant in stature, and Hogan only of medium height, though well built, but although he had the advantage in build, the butcher was absolutely helpless in the scissor-like hold Hogan had put on him.

Something had to be done, and I immediately proceeded to do the wrong thing. I released one of the "under dog's" legs, and so freed the butcher, who jumped at once to his feet, and left the man to me. Seizing a wooden mallet (I don't know why the butcher kept a mallet in his shop, I'm sure) Hogan swung a blow at me which I thought was going to be aimed at my head, but which caught me in the lower part of the body, crumpling me up completely.

In falling, I grasped the man round the body with both arms, and down we went together. He still had the mallet, but my "bear-like" embrace prevented him from using it effectively. There we rolled and fought till the arrival of three Thames policemen to whom he was known, and who, calling him by name, threatened him with all sorts of punishment. Eventually they got him with his face downwards and his arms behind him, and in that position he was kept until the arrival of a stretcher, on to which he was strapped and carried shoulder high to the waterside police station.

In the struggle I was forgotten, and was left lying on the floor until someone informed the police at my station. Later I was taken to my home in Prince's Square in a butcher's van, to be again forgotten till my name was called

in court next morning. I was on the sick list for some little while, and, having plenty of time for reflection, began to wonder if my job was really worth while—twenty-four bob a week and a good hiding at more or less regular intervals.

I certainly could think of no worse job than police work in Whitechapel, and then occurred an incident which, although it didn't concern me, made me feel more dubious than ever. This was the absolutely undeserved dismissal of two of my chums of drill-ground days.

The dismissal of these two young constables came about in this way. They had been on duty in a place then known as Ratcliffe Highway, probably the most notorious street for crime that London has ever known. There they arrested a man and woman for some minor offence, and taking them to the station, charged them.

Later on, the two people were allowed out on bail in their own recognisances, to surrender themselves at Thames Police Court the next day. Now it had been customary for a long time for prisoners on bail to be taken by the officer who had arrested them to the back of the court, and placed there with other prisoners to await their turn to go up before the magistrate.

What actually happened was that these two young and inexperienced officers mistook another man and woman for the two they had arrested overnight, and taking them to the back of the court, placed them in the dock when the names were called. Whereupon the first two stepped forward and said that they were the persons wanted. The whole thing, of course, had been “ planted,” but the magistrate refused to hear the constables and directed that the matter should be brought to the notice of the Commissioner.

I was present and saw the whole affair, and there can be no doubt that the two prisoners and their friends took advantage of this very loose way of dealing with prisoners, and fixed everything, even to the wearing of each other's clothes. I should have been deceived in the same way, but nothing availed the unfortunate officers, and they were dismissed the Force, though I like to think the magistrate never intended that his action should have such serious consequences. Incidentally, the second couple had the audacity to bring an action for wrongful arrest, but they lost their case because of having made no protest at the time.

What might be termed an epidemic of burglaries broke out in the division not long after I joined it. Every night brought its complaint.

Sometimes a very serious one. We were threatened with being reported if anything occurred on our beats which we failed to discover in time. There weren't many wealthy people living in the district, but, of course, they were fully entitled to protection. Constables going on duty were recommended to wear rubber on their heels, and as rubber was not then in general use we were forced to all sorts of little expedients. I often think of the little contrivances we used in the way of cotton, whalebone, pins, chalk, etc., and will tell you of an incident which proved the wisdom of their use.

Less than a year after I joined the division I was posted to a beat which, while somewhat rowdy during the evening, was quiet and peaceful during the night. I had seen something which had aroused my suspicions and I marked a long piece of hoarding with cotton. Examining it at about 2 a.m., I found that it had been broken. It could, of course, have been done by a marauding cat, but there were other signs which convinced us that it was the work of a thief.

Getting the assistance of men from adjoining beats, I commenced an investigation. Leading the way, I climbed the hoarding, and passing over some waste ground, came to a block of buildings which were in the course of reconstruction. We were now at the rear of the premises of a jeweller and, turning for a moment to see if my mates were in a favourable position, I heard a voice say, "Don't come any nearer, or it will be bad for you." I couldn't see a thing, so just taking a chance, I jumped for the spot.

I found myself in the clutches of an armed burglar, and could just see two other figures behind him. Fortunately for me, the attentions of the latter were occupied with my mates, and I only had one to deal with. I could see his revolver and fought to get it. He could have shot me easily, but whether it was because he was afraid, or thought perhaps his retreat was cut off, he didn't shoot, and I was spared for another day.

There was a long struggle between three burglars and four constables, in the course of which we fell through the ruins on to the floor below, and there we stopped until,

with the arrival of assistance, we escorted our captives to the station, not, however, before we had all been badly assaulted. The place where the men had been in hiding revealed as complete an outfit of burglar's implements as you could wish to see. The men were sentenced to imprisonment, and all the officers engaged commended for their actions.

This little affair brought me to the notice of the officer in charge of the C.I.D., who gave me much useful advice, and, my discontent disappearing, I began to take a real interest in crime and criminals, and as I doubt very much whether any other two districts in England harboured as many criminals as ours, I had plenty of material to work on.

It was not long after the incident recorded above, and probably because of it, that I got my first opportunity of working with officers of the C.I.D.

I was patrolling my beat in the neighbourhood of Leman Street Station, when I was fetched in by a detective-sergeant. “ Take that tunic and helmet off,” he said. I wondered what was coming next, but he gave me no time to think.

“ Get into some old clothes,” he went on. “ I'm going to take you on the job of your life,” and then, thinking perhaps that I looked too cheerful at the prospect, he added, “ And you'll be lucky if you come back alive.”

Not in the least perturbed, I was soon out of my uniform and into an old coat. The detective completed my disguise with the aid of a dirty coloured handkerchief, remarking as he did so, “ Now you look like a real Whitechapel bird-catcher.” We were joined by two other detectives, whom I knew by sight but not by name, and together we boarded an old four-wheeled horse-cab (the only suitable conveyance in those days), three of us getting inside, and the other getting up in front to act as guide. I was sworn to secrecy, and told that if the job was a failure I was to keep my mouth shut about it. Away we went—where, I hadn't the foggiest notion, never having been further east before than Whitechapel.

The ride was full of interest, as these old “ splits ” told me many stories, some of which were a revelation to me. They talked with the greatest confidence and generally behaved as if I had been working with them for years.

Day was just breaking when we pulled up on some marsh land on the banks of the River Lea. Here I was told to get out and reconnoitre a villa situated about a hundred yards away. "Get on your knees and find out if there is a light in any part of that house," said the chief, "and don't make any mistake about it."

Down I went, and soon found myself crawling in water, for at some places the river had overflowed its banks. However, I enjoyed it, and would have gone *through* the river if necessary.

When I reached the house I could see no light, but thought I could hear voices. I had received no instructions as to voices, and from the conversation on the way down I understood that they expected to find an empty house.

But there were voices right enough, and before I could make any move the door opened, and out came several men. I was within six feet of them, but fortunately they didn't see me, otherwise my friends' arrangements might have been considerably upset. They turned the other way, and in a state of perspiration I crawled back to the cab and reported.

Things apparently were not going as anticipated, but I had been right not to interfere. Quickly we all made for the house, where I was hoisted to an upper story window—the only one unfastened—and entering, made my way to the street door and let the others in. In the back room on the ground floor (it was the last to be entered, and I could see my friends were getting anxious) we found the largest collection of gold and silver watches that I have ever seen at one time. After a hurried conference, in which I took no part, I was told to remain in charge of the property, whilst they visited another place, the whereabouts of which they did not tell me. By this time I had learned the nick-names of the detectives, the senior was "Tommy Upright," and the two others, "Masher" and "Chinaman." How they came by these names will be matter for another chapter.

"Got your 'stick'?" said "Tommy." "Yes," I replied.

"Right," he continued. "You're in charge till we come back; if anybody comes, keep them here. Don't talk, but listen to anything they may have to say, and don't forget to use your 'stick' if it's necessary." With that, they went off.

“ Don’t talk, but listen,” I thought, and then wondered whom and how many they expected. I didn’t have to wait long, for before my friends could have got more than a short distance away, there was a knock at the door. Looking through the window, I saw a villainous-looking individual, who, from his appearance, might have been a burglar or a pugilist.

However, he wanted to come in, and as my instructions were to keep anyone who came, I decided to oblige him. “ I’ll have this one,” I thought, anyhow.

He was getting impatient, for he had knocked a second time before I opened the door. Gently I pulled it back, and he walked quietly in. Still holding the door as he entered, I turned gradually round, at the same time closing the door behind him as we came face to face. Without saying a word my visitor walked across the room, and leaning against the fireplace, eyed me intently.

I didn’t know whether to treat the situation humorously or seriously. I remembered the chief’s instructions, but when this person remained “ dumb ” I wondered if he too had been told not to talk, or if he was just being artful. Locking the door, and putting the key in my pocket to prevent my visitor getting out the way he came in, we stood there glaring at each other for some minutes.

I was placed in an awkward predicament, and it was so easy to do the wrong thing. I just wished the man would speak, but he wouldn’t even move, and every moment I felt that he might spring at me and perhaps he was more than I could manage.

The suspense was broken by another knock at the door. “ What do I do now ? ” I thought, but my “ friend ” came to my assistance, and saying, “ Let me open the door for you,” moved in its direction. “ You stop where you are,” I said, at the same time placing my hand on my truncheon, but being careful not to draw it, having seen the folly of doing so on the occasion to which I have already referred.

Surlily the man leaned back again on the fireplace, and quite expecting to see my chief, I opened the door, only to get another shock, as instead of the chief it was two strangers. Since my instructions were to keep all that came, and seeing that the new-comers were hesitating, I just said, “ Come in.”

“ Is it all right ? ” asked one of them.

"As far as I'm concerned," said I, and closing the door as they came in, I placed my back against it.

Waiting a few minutes and wondering what on earth I should do if they decided to make a bolt for it, one of the new arrivals suddenly said, "I think we've made a mistake," and made for the door. I pressed closer to it, intending to stop him, and a second later received a terrific blow, which, aimed at my jaw, I caught, in trying to "slip" it, on my left eye.

This time I didn't think twice about using my truncheon. Out it came, and clean and hard I struck the man across the head. This, evidently, was not to the liking of my first visitor, and before I could attempt to stop him, he jumped through the closed window and got away. In the general mêlée that followed I received a very rough handling, but the smashing of the window had warned my friends, who were apparently quite near, and to my relief they came in by the way my visitor had left.

There I stood, bleeding from nose and mouth, with one man on the floor in a bad way, and the other in a corner from which he couldn't escape without passing me. I quickly explained everything to my chief, who asked what the third man was like. He recognised him from my description.

"That's 'Rashers,'" he said (a name which I learned later was the soubriquet of a well-known receiver). "So you came here to meet 'Rashers,' did you!"

But not a word was forthcoming from either, and into the cab they were hustled and driven off to the station. Together with one of the detectives, I remained behind to pack up the "swag," and from my friend I learned that the man who had escaped was badly "wanted," and that if I saw him I would be justified in arresting him forthwith. A few days later, when working my beat in Commercial Road, I did see him.

"You're 'Rashers,'" I said.

"Yes," he answered with a laugh, "that's what they call me, but you haven't been in the Force long enough to know me."

"Well, anyway," said I, "I'm going to make sure that you don't get away this time. You're the man who jumped through the window, and you're coming along with me."

"Don't you be a fool," he answered; "I can prove where I was any day or night last week."

I took him to the station, where he was detained, but his luck was in, for apart from my evidence there was nothing to overthrow the strong alibi he set up, and he got away with it.

The others were convicted and went to prison for long terms. I shared in the commendations, and was recommended for the C.I.D., but vacancies were few, and a long waiting list kept me in uniform for some time.

A month on point duty now brought one or two little arrests of some importance, in the way of stealing from shop fronts, or, as it is known to the profession, "shop-dragging," a type of offence very prevalent in Whitechapel and Commercial Road.

I had taken up my post in the vicinity of George Yard, Whitechapel, when I spotted a couple of tough-looking individuals handling a suit of clothes which was hanging in front of a pawnbroker's shop. They attracted my attention because the clothing was not in any way suited to them, and it was fairly obvious that if they were going to use it, it would be for some dishonest purpose. They were so intent on the job that they didn't see me, and I was right on top of them when one of them jerked the suit from the fastening. Turning quickly, he said, "'Ere you are, cop it while I get the other one, they'll fetch a dollar," and down they came right into my hands.

"Blimey," he gasped, catching sight of me for the first time, "where did *you* come from?"

His mate having bolted, he rushed after him, and carrying the suit in my hands, I followed at top speed along the Whitechapel Road to Mile End Road, where, in trying to turn, he collided with a baked potato can, bringing the whole thing down on top of him. The proprietor of the can caused further trouble by turning on both of us, and striking the thief over the head with a large salt box, nearly blinded him with salt.

My prisoner turned out to be an "old-timer," and he was sent to prison. My chief trouble in the case, however, was caused by the baked potato merchant, who was the cause of my making out endless reports concerning the damage to his can. He was fully compensated in the finish.

Other arrests for "shop-dragging," included those of

stealing boots and corsets from shop fronts, both of which brought me further experience of the notorious George Yard point duty. There was also an amusing case of obstruction by a "cheap-jack," or gutter auctioneer, which brought forth some "wise-cracks" from the magistrate.

In answer to His Worship's usual question, "Anything to say?" the prisoner replied:

"I was getting on wiv me business when up comes this young copper, and says, 'Take it away,' and all I says wos, 'Your bread's buttered, cantcher let me get a little dripping fer mine?'"

"Unless you knew his bread was buttered on both sides you had no right to tease him," said the magistrate.

"Ah—well," went on my capture, "wen 'e's older and got 'alf a dozen kids . . ." but again His Worship interrupted to say: "I hope their bread will be buttered, too, but not on both sides—it isn't good for them. And now if you'll promise not to get in this young policeman's way again, I'll let you go and get your 'dripping.'"

Laughter in court!

Another case which had its distinctly humorous side was one of "snatching," or to the initiated "shoo fly," and this time my attention was drawn to a suspicious-looking individual who was hanging about the entrance to George Yard. Each time I approached him he walked away in front of me in the same direction, and as I overtook him he would turn and walk back.

This movement continued for some time, and the suspect always being nearest the Yard when I stopped, I guessed he was manœuvring for position. I wondered how best to circumvent him, as if he was a "snatcher" I knew he would make for the Yard, and if I was to prevent his working on my beat I should have to stop just thereabouts. It worked, and the man disappeared. The next thing I saw was a stately-looking old gentleman, wearing a "red-lot"—otherwise a gold watch and chain.

He was evidently a stranger to the neighbourhood, or he wouldn't have exposed his property so freely, as he was balancing it on an "outside corporation" that was a veritable invitation to any self-respecting "snatcher." Thinking there would certainly be trouble if any of the "boys" were about, I saw my suspect coming towards the old gentleman.

It was all over in a second; he had lifted the lot and decamped. Away into George Yard ran the “ snatcher,” followed by his victim. They had about twenty yards start of me, but I quickly joined in the chase, and overtook the thief just as he was about to enter some model dwellings.

He offered no resistance, except to complain, in very choice language, that I was interfering with his living. He yielded up the chain, but swore he hadn’t got the watch. The victim said he couldn’t find it either, and from the looks on the faces of some of the “ locals ” who had joined in the chase I felt pretty convinced he never would.

There was quite a pleasant little running commentary between prisoner and prosecutor on the way to the station, the former telling the old gentleman that he had no right to be down this way without someone to look after him, and asking what he thought would happen to him if it wasn’t for the coppers.

This last challenge brought from the prosecutor the statement that he had been a Scotland Yard detective for years, and that in his day he would have dealt with the matter on the spot. I didn’t believe him at the time, but sure enough it was proved when we got to the station that the watch had been a presentation from the officers and men of the last division in which he had served.

He said he wouldn’t have lost it for the world, and expressed the hope that the matter would be kept out of the papers, as it would make him look such a fool. The chief was charged with stealing a watch and chain from Mr. F. in High Street, Whitechapel, and appeared in court next day. And now comes the sequel.

Arriving at the court well before time, and taking me into his confidence, the prosecutor informed me that just before going to bed the previous night he felt in his pocket in the usual way and there found—his watch! He endeavoured to explain it by the old pickpocket story that it had been restored secretly by the prisoner’s friends in order to stop him from prosecuting.

The truth, of course, was that the watch had never been stolen at all, an examination of the chain showing clearly where it and the watch had parted company. It needed a little explaining to the magistrate, and the Yard man felt his position rather keenly when rebuked by His Worship. The prisoner, however, was merely amused.

"Why, 'e ain't lorst nothing at all," he said. "'E's got 'is chain, an' 'e never lorst 'is watch. Wot are you letting him stand there and tell a tale like that for? 'E ought to be over 'ere, an' me over there." Then in a tone of withering sarcasm: "'E ought ter be a 'tcc, 'e ought! "

The man was dealt with summarily and appeared to be quite satisfied.

Once during my early days I was posted for a month for night duty to a place known as Wapping Island, an interesting spot, where I often met my friend, the late George R. Sims, who often wrote about this place and its characters.

During this month I was suddenly transferred to another beat in the neighbourhood of the Royal Mint, and it was here that I got the first big thrill in my career as a policeman. I did not refer to it in its proper place as the incident was connected with the notorious "Jack the Ripper," and I think this person is sufficiently important to merit a chapter to himself.

CHAPTER IV

" JACK THE RIPPER "

ON a bitter night during the winter of 1890-91 I was patrolling the beat to which I had been transferred in the neighbourhood of the Mint. There was not a soul to be seen, when the stillness was suddenly disturbed by the shrill of a police whistle. Police whistles were often blown improperly, but I felt certain that this was a regulation blast, and, after I had made sure of the direction, I made off at top speed.

The call brought me to a place called Swallow Gardens, which is actually a railway arch running from Royal Mint Street to Chamber Street, Whitechapel, and though in the dim past there may have been gardens in the vicinity, there has certainly been nothing of the sort within living memory to justify the name of the place.

The call for assistance came from P.C. Thompson, 240, " H " division, whom I knew well on account of our serving part of our time together as recruits on the drill ground. When I reached the spot I found Thompson there with two night watchmen, one a plain-clothes policeman who had been patrolling the district.

About midway in the arch lay a woman with her head nearly severed from her body. She was still alive, but so large was the wound in her throat that articulation was impossible.

" What's up ? " I asked.

" Murder, " said my colleague in a hoarse voice, adding in a whisper, " A ' Jack the Ripper ' job. "

Like myself poor Thompson was inexperienced, and had come across the body whilst working his beat. As we stood there wondering momentarily what was best to be done, I little thought that my pal was soon to be the victim of a similar tragedy; but so it was, for shortly afterwards Thompson was stabbed to death by a man named Abrahams in a coffee-stall brawl.

"Another ' Jack the Ripper ' murder! " Only those who were living at the time and who were old enough to appreciate it can imagine what that meant. When that dread news was flashed round, not merely all London, but all England, was terrified.

The form lying in the roadway was that of a young woman. Her clothing was disarranged, and there could be no doubt that she had been brutally murdered. Apart from the fearful wound in the throat there were other terrible injuries about the lower part of the trunk. In the gutter by her side lay a little *crêpe* hat.

The amazing part of it all was that, although this ferocious attack could not have taken place more than a few seconds earlier, Thompson had neither heard nor seen anything of the woman's assailant. The archway was empty. The constable was wearing rubber heels that night and had approached the spot absolutely noiselessly, yet the murderer had apparently vanished into thin air. Small wonder that there were many people living in the East End at that time who were quite prepared to believe that the " Ripper " crimes were not the work of any human agency.

In answer to our whistles other and more experienced officers were soon on the scene, and indeed I was not sorry. This was my first acquaintance with anything in the nature of violent death, and I'd had enough for one night.

The poor mutilated body was taken to the station, and soon Dr. Phillips, the police surgeon, was examining another fearful example of the work of the man whom the police could not catch, for the revolting nature of the woman's injuries left no doubt as to the author of the crime.

The hunt for the murderer began at once, and I was only one of the hundreds of police and civilians who took part in the search.

Small parties of men were organised, and night after night they scoured alleys, archways and passages in which the assassin might lurk.

On the night of the murder every house in the district was searched. If, as it was assumed, the murderer had been disturbed at his ghoulish work by the arrival of P.C. Thompson, it seemed that the only possible way in which he could have escaped was to have taken refuge in one of

the houses quite close to the scene of the crime. But the search yielded no result.

As a further precaution, a cordon of police was drawn round the docks. Boats were not allowed to leave till every member of the crew had been examined and had satisfied the authorities as to their innocence.

It should be added that the railway arch in which the body was found ran under the Great Eastern goods yard and extended for fifty yards into Royal Mint Street, coming out just opposite the Royal Mint refinery, and here a policeman was on duty all night. But he, too, had neither seen nor heard anything unusual until the blowing of the police whistle. It was uncanny.

The victim was soon identified as Frances Coles, of Thrawl Street, Spitalfields, a district incidentally in which several of the other “ Ripper ” crimes had taken place, and where the victims lived.

Frances was young and pretty, and the deputy at the house at which she lodged spoke very highly of her, describing her as a young woman of a superior type. There was no doubt, however, that she had recently taken to leading an immoral life in the East End.

We got what was thought to be a good clue, one, in fact, which for a long time looked as though it would lead to the solution of the biggest problem with which the White-chapel police had ever been faced.

This was an old black hat which was found pinned underneath the shawl which the woman was wearing. She had apparently just bought the hat which we found lying in the roadway, and had pinned the old one to her dress after having made the purchase.

The Spitalfields district was combed for the seller of the hat, and the search was successful, for not only was the little shop found, but what appeared to be very important information about the buyer was also obtained.

The story told by the woman shopkeeper was that Frances had bought the hat the previous afternoon for five shillings. Earlier in the day she had tried to get the hat by paying a small sum down, but being unsuccessful had gone away, to come back later with the full amount, saying she had found a friend who was willing to lend her the money.

More than this, the milliner had noticed a man loitering about outside whilst Frances was in the shop, but as he

had kept his head averted, she was only able to say that he was middle-aged, thick-set, and fairly well dressed. After buying the hat, Frances had remarked that the old one might come in useful, and thereupon had pinned it carefully to her dress under her shawl. On leaving the shop, she was joined by the middle-aged man some distance down the street.

Needless to say, the police were most anxious to make the acquaintance of this man, and a strange sequence of events led to his discovery and arrest.

Earlier on the night of the tragedy, a man was found to have called at Frances Coles' lodgings, and to have asked for her. His hand was bleeding badly, which he explained by saying that some roughs had knocked him down, and had stolen all his money. He stayed with Frances for an hour, and was heard to leave at 1 a.m. Half an hour later, Frances went out on the errand from which she never returned. Far more significant was the discovery that the man returned again to the woman's lodgings at 3 a.m. He was then excited and covered with blood.

"I've been knocked down and robbed in Ratcliffe Highway," he told the deputy of the lodging house, and when asked how that could be, considering he was supposed to have lost all his money in the assault the previous night, he said: "They thought they were going to get something, but they were mistaken."

The man wanted lodgings, but on account of his appearance he was refused, and advised to go to the London Hospital. At the hospital the police found that a man had called there in the early hours of the morning, complaining of an injury to his ribs, but the only injury the doctor could find was a cut over the right eye, which must have bled very freely indeed to account for the saturated condition of his clothing. The man had been treated, and left after an hour. The hospital people gave it as their opinion that he was a seafaring man.

There was tremendous excitement now among the police engaged on the case, as it really looked as though they were hot on the trail of the Terror. Next day the excitement spread to the people outside, and big crowds assembled in front of Lemn Street Station waiting for the news that "Jack the Ripper" had been laid by the heels at last.

An arrest was made that night. Acting on the strength

of a valuable clue they had picked up at the docks, two detectives walked into a Whitechapel public house, and after questioning a short, well-built man, took him to the police station.

Whitechapel went mad that day. The news of the arrest spread like wildfire and everyone seemed to take it for granted that the “ Ripper ” was safely under lock and key. Tremendous difficulty was experienced when the man was brought up in court. Outside, the crowd was demanding his blood, and I am perfectly certain he would have been lynched if the mob had succeeded in getting hold of him.

Things certainly looked black against the prisoner. A married man with five children, but living apart from his wife. He vigorously protested his innocence from the first, and when the police came to investigate his story they found that the evidence against him was far from being as conclusive as it had appeared at first.

The man did not deny that he had met Frances Coles. He admitted buying her the hat, but he stoutly maintained that he had not seen her again after leaving her lodgings at twenty minutes to one on the fatal evening.

It was the most improbable part of his story that saved him. It was established beyond all doubt that he *had* been twice attacked that night, and the wide gaps in the chain of evidence were such that there was nothing for it but to discharge him.

After this a story circulated that the “ Ripper ” was a butcher, who wore blue overalls and a leather apron, and an English Jew named Jacobs, a perfectly harmless man, somehow attracted suspicion to himself. Possibly because, working in a slaughter-house, he always wore a leather apron.

People would point Jacobs out in the street as the suspected man, and more than once he had to run for it. I myself was often obliged to take him into the police station for protection. The thing so preyed on the poor fellow's mind that it finally caused him to lose his reason.

I am afraid I cannot throw any light on the problem of the “ Ripper's ” identity, but one thing I do know, and that is that amongst the police who were most concerned in the case there was a general feeling that a certain doctor, known to me, could have thrown quite a lot of light on the subject. This particular doctor was never far away when

the crimes were committed, and it is certain that the injuries inflicted on the victims could only have been done by one skilled in the use of the knife.

Many stories and theories have been put forward, but, with one exception, I doubt if any one of them had the slightest foundation in fact. The exception to which I refer was that of George Klosowski, *alias* Chapman, the South London wife murderer.

About the period of the "Ripper" murders Chapman lived in Whitechapel, where he carried on a hairdresser's business in a sort of "dive" under a public-house at the corner of George Yard, that notorious locality to which I have referred in previous chapters.

I have no data to assist me, but I remember that there were—in addition to the one I have been dealing with—a dozen murders attributed to "Jack the Ripper" during the years 1888 and 1890, and so far as I can ascertain Chapman was in London for nearly the whole of that period. He left before the end of 1890 and went to America, where it is believed he was responsible for several murders. As far as my information goes, he had not returned to England in 1891, the year in which Frances Coles met her death.

There was, moreover, a complete difference in the methods employed by the two men, for while Chapman slowly poisoned his victims, the "Ripper" resorted to the worst possible use of the knife, horribly mutilating the bodies, and in one instance cutting his victim into fifty or more pieces, distributing them about a room, afterwards securing the door and making his departure through the window.

So far as the evidence goes, robbery was not the motive in the case of either Chapman or the "Ripper." Lust was the deciding factor in the case of Chapman, for while he was tiring of one "wife" he was preparing another. He was a Bluebeard, and his story is known. But nobody knows and nobody ever will know the true story of "Jack the Ripper."

He never returned, and was never heard of again after the Swallow Gardens murder, and that, as far as we know, was the last of his many crimes.

CHAPTER V

I BECOME A MATADOR!

Uniform experiences—Three amusing episodes—An infuriated bull—A bottle of beer—"Bones's Ghost."

PREVENTION of crime is one of the first duties instilled into the minds of young policemen. I don't know whether bull-baiting would be considered an "act of prevention," but it certainly is not included in the curriculum. However, I once indulged in the sport in the middle of Whitechapel, and it may amuse you to know the circumstances.

About 9 a.m. one market morning I found myself temporarily relieving another constable on point duty in the centre of High Street, Whitechapel. Crowds of people hurried along in both directions, the majority making their way Citywards.

I was very mystified by a complete change of direction, all the people going westward suddenly turning and running helter-skelter the opposite way. My mystification only deepened when I saw the driver of a City-bound tramcar jump off his platform and make a dash into the Black Horse Hotel.

Turning round to discover if possible the cause of this sudden unpopularity of the City, I saw coming towards me, and not more than fifty yards away, an infuriated bull. Escaped from the horrors of a local slaughter-house, it came careering down the High Street, followed at a respectful distance by two grimy-looking butchers, who, with their pole-axes and knives, looked almost as awe-inspiring as the bull.

Suddenly the animal stopped to investigate a big pile of books on a stall near by, and then, as if to emphasise its contempt for literature, tossed the whole lot high into the air. As it stamped and pawed the ground one of the

butchers cautiously approached it with his pole-axe, and all the people looked out with straining eyes to see what was going to happen.

Unfortunately, they let out a subdued cheer, which had the effect of changing the situation entirely. The bull lifted its head, emitted a fearsome bellow, and the butcher, dropping his axe, made a swift dash for a hay waggon, and ensured his safety by climbing right to the top of the load.

Meanwhile I was still standing in the middle of the road, trying to think out what was best to be done. There was little time left for thinking, as the bull, with its tail in the air, was now coming at an increased pace in my direction.

People behind it followed at a safe distance—those in front simply fled. Attached to the animal's horns was a stout rope about twenty yards long, and I thought if only I could dodge the animal and grab the rope, I might be able to tie it round one of the four posts which surrounded the refuge on which I was standing.

A moment later, and with another bellow, the bull charged me, but missing me by inches, passed on, and snatching at the rope, with a quick twist I had made a noose over the head of the post.

The consequence was rather surprising, for it brought the enraged animal up with a jerk, which enabled me to make another turn in the rope.

The bull fell to its knees and remained for a few seconds in that position, but unless either its horns or the rope gave way, it was held as fast as a ship is by its anchor. Suddenly jumping to its feet, the animal made a violent struggle to get free, but finding it couldn't get beyond the tether I had made for it, started to walk slowly towards me. Still keeping the double turn on the post, I hauled in the rest of the rope hand over hand, until the bull had been drawn—quite unwittingly—right up to the post.

There we stood, with the hot breath of the beast puffing in my face, and an occasional bellow which seemed to go right through me.

The scene now looked just like an arena, for the crowd had formed into a large ring, and kept shouting to me, with encouraging words, to hold on till more ropes could be obtained. I must have looked the reverse of dignified as

the bull, starting to circle round the post, caused me to circle too.

A finer beast, with bulging eyes and ring in nose, could never have been surpassed at any fat-stock show, and whether it was because my nerves were giving way, it appeared to me to be increasing in bulk every moment. It needed every ounce of my strength, too, to keep the animal hard up against the post.

A burst of cheering announced the arrival of assistance, and making their way through the crowd, I saw the two butchers, armed this time with ropes. They tried to lasso the bull, but the awkward position of its head made this impossible, and they were still too nervous to come and fasten the rope round its neck. My deliverance came in the form of a man with a pole, to which was attached a chain and clip, and who with extraordinary dexterity managed to fix the clip on to the ring in the bull's nose.

Two ropes were now tied to its horns, and it became safe to remove the rope from the post. The poor creature was now held on either side by men hanging to the rope ends, whilst the ring in its nose was twisted, till, becoming completely under control, it was hustled back to the slaughter-house, accompanied by part of the crowd that was determined to see the thing out to a finish.

I was left to receive congratulations and offers of liquid refreshment from the remainder, and also to try and restore my distinctly ruffled appearance. Any exhilaration I may have felt at my conduct was immediately squashed by my acting sergeant, who now came up and told me I had made a fool of myself, and that it was the butcher's job.

A few days later, and whilst on the same "point," I was approached by my superintendent, who asked me casually if I had seen anything of a "circus" spectacle thereabouts the other day.

I had to admit that I had, and was then asked if I had reported it. Realising that I had made a bad error of omission in *not* doing so, I endeavoured to make excuses by saying that the animal had come off City ground, and that City officers were present.

Back at the station I was met by a crotchety inspector, who gave me a thorough telling off for not reporting the matter, as it had caused a lot of trouble, and that I myself was on the report for the following day.

That meant that I was a "defaulter," and to add insult to injury, instead of letting me go home for my rest, the inspector made me sit down and write a full report there and then. This was a terrible effort, and I was only able to satisfy the inspector when he wanted to go home himself, which he did, after ordering me to be at the superintendent's office the following day at 10 a.m. for "defaulter's" parade. This latter is a semi-military sort of business, with the culprit marched in under escort.

I was there waiting at 10 a.m. as ordered, and looking along the passage to the "super's" office I could see, besides the "super" himself, the acting sergeant (a grub-like individual, who never got any higher than the position he then held), the inspector patrolling, the inspector who called for my report, and the sub-divisional inspector, the last-named being in charge of the "ceremonies."

I was just wondering what was going to happen to me, when I was marched forward, my helmet being snatched off just as I was about to enter the room.

"Halt! Attention!" commanded the senior officer, and I found myself facing the superintendent. I heard the charge and the report read, and then came the examination of witnesses.

"Did you receive a report from the defaulter, sergeant?" asked the president.

"No, sir," said the "acting" one, "I myself was about the High Street all the morning, too."

"Were you," replied the superintendent, "then how is it you didn't go to the constable's assistance, and see to it that a report was made?"

Never did I see a man look so crestfallen.

The inspectors had nothing to say about the report, but spoke favourably of my work and attention to duty. After the room had been cleared of witnesses I was told to "stand easy."

"It is not my intention to punish you," said the "super," "it never was; and for being here at all as a defaulter, you have only yourself to blame. Many favourable letters concerning your conduct have been received at the Yard from the public, and when the Commissioner called for a report, I knew nothing about it."

So *that* was what had caused all the trouble!

"Had you reported the matter," went on the "super,"

"you would have received the Commissioner's reward. In future, it would be as well to remember to have your own interest in mind, as well as that of the Force and the public."

"*En passant*," I would like to refer to the esteem and respect both Force and Public had for this "he-man" superintendent. Everybody loved John Mulvaney.

The following little story is apropos of the above; it is a true one.

At a class of instruction for recruits by the chief inspector at Leman Street a few days after the occurrence in the High Street, the following dialogue was heard:

Chief Inspector (to P.C. Sheehan): "If you saw a mad bull rushing towards you on your beat, what steps would you take?"

P.C. Sheehan: "Long ones!"

The next two episodes I have to relate concern a section sergeant who served in the same division as myself, and who rejoiced in the extraordinary nickname of "Bones's Ghost."

When I first knew him, his soubriquet was just plain "Bones," and it was not until after the incident which I shall tell in my second story that the "Ghost" was added.

A description of "Bones" may perhaps explain why he was so beloved by the men of the division. Tall, thin, and miserable-looking, with a pronounced North-country accent, he kidded himself that he was both religious and a teetotalter, but he never went to a place of worship, and never, so long as I knew him, refused a drop out of a bottle; if it was offered to him.

He was supposed to have come from the Potteries, and if this was true he was the most unfinished piece of ware that ever came from that gloomy district. I never purposely tried to "make game" of Sergeant "Bones," but I always seemed to be coming up against him whether I wanted to or not, as I certainly did in the circumstances I am now going to relate.

On the night (or rather, during the early hours of the morning) in question, I was patrolling my beat leisurely, but at the same time leaving nothing to chance, when I saw a large bottle of beer standing in the doorway of a public house. Whether it had been forgotten (which I very much doubt), or if it had been left there for the temptation of the

man on the beat (a much more likely possibility), I don't know, but there it was.

It struck me that I might have a little fun with it at the expense of the man on the adjoining beat, so picking it up, I carried it in that direction, intending to "plant" it where he might see it, and then wait in hiding to watch the result.

Just before reaching the spot, however, I saw a policeman standing in the shadows of a lamp at the corner of a street opposite. He looked drowsy and obviously hadn't seen me, so I decided on a change of plan.

Getting as near as possible without disturbing him, I took the bottle by the neck, and with a swinging heave, threw it. It crashed to pieces at his feet, and as he jumped back into the light I saw to my astonishment that it was Sergeant "Bones."

As with a gyratory movement he stumbled into the road, my mind immediately ran on reports and numbers, for there are many report forms, and all have different numbers according to the nature of the offence, and I foresaw that *this* report form was going to be a big one.

"Bones" hadn't seen me, for he stood gazing up at the windows as I hurried over to him.

"Did you see that?" he gasped.

"Yes," I answered, "where do you think it came from?"

"Must have come from a window," he said, and then with a hypocritical outburst, "It's beer, the stinking stuff, and it's all over my trousers."

It certainly was, and having agreed, I drew his attention to an open window, but was careful to add that it couldn't have come from there, or I should have seen it.

However, the open window was enough for "Bones," and he made straight for the door of the house. As there was no knocker, he beat such a terrific tattoo on the door with his truncheon that not only the inmates of this particular house but nearly all the other inhabitants of the street were aroused.

A half-awakened man came to the door, and after having been told what he was wanted for, told the sergeant he knew nothing about it.

But "Bones" wouldn't believe him. "I'll have that bit of a shirt off you for two pins," he said, and I had to laugh, for the poor devil's shirt was little more than a neck-

band and sleeves. However, the man persisted in his denials, and "Bones" finally had to apologise.

The making out of the report was a terrible ordeal for the sergeant, as he was afraid there would be a lot of trouble about disturbing these people. As he left me, he told me to leave *my* report at the station when I went off duty. It was very brief, and read:

"I was in the precincts of the Town at 1.45 a.m., when I heard the breaking of glass, and the sound of something bursting. Hurrying to the spot I found the sergeant covered with confusion, and smothered in beer."

I was careful to hand it in to the station officer before "Bones" could make me alter it. It was all over the place in five minutes. It was a long time before the sergeant heard the end of it, and if he hadn't got a nickname already, I think he would have been called "Beery" from that time on.

And now I come to the story that earned "Bones" the additional soubriquet of "Ghost." I think I will leave my readers to guess the name of the constable who was responsible. For the present let us call him "X."

A practice of that time, long since discontinued, was the patrolling of recreation grounds, churchyards, etc., and in some cases the stoke-hole of the church and vicarage. In the latter case the keys were always left with the constable on the beat, who visited the place at 2 a.m. and again when he went off duty at 6 a.m.

It was during the winter of 1894-5, the worst for years, and the particular night of which I am speaking was, I remember, exceptionally cold, and it is easy to imagine what a blessing the fire—even of a stoke-hole—would be after the bitter winds, to the half-frozen constable who walked into the vicarage grounds at 2 a.m.

Everything *without* being apparently in order, and everybody *within* being apparently asleep, "X" hurried to the stoke-room, and stoking up the fire proceeded to hot up some coffee from his bottle. Perhaps the fire took a lot of stoking, or perhaps the warmth was too much for him, but he certainly stayed in the stoke-hole longer than he had any right to.

However, when he did go, he found to his horror that there had been a fall of snow, and the streets, quite dry

and clean when he went in, were now covered with a thick white carpet. To the uninitiated this may seem to be a matter of little consequence, but footprints in the snow are damaging things, and, if he were to leave the place now, would tell a pretty story to the *sergeant or patrolling officer*. Of his leaving the place there certainly could be no argument, but he must have gone in before the snow came—and when was that?

There seemed to be nothing for it but to go out and face the music, but while racking his brains to think of some reasonable excuse for being absent from his beat, his eyes fell upon a pair of boots. Here was a ray of hope, for they were so small they obviously belonged to a woman—they certainly didn't belong to a "flatty."

"X" had a great idea. Slipping off his regulation footwear, he forced his toes into the little boots, and making sure that the coast was clear, walked adroitly backwards step by step right up the path and to the street—without making a false step.

Slipping into a shop doorway, changing was a matter of seconds, and over into the shrubbery went my lady's footwear, to be the subject of another inquiry, if ever he got clear of this one.

He was about to move off, when the sergeant hove in sight. It was "Bones," and when "Bones" had been looking for a policeman who ought to have been on his beat and wasn't, well—that constable was very definitely "for it."

Keeping well in the dark, "X" watched the sergeant and saw him stop at the churchyard gates, where he stepped into the roadway and made a thorough survey. Then, returning to the gates and looking to see if anyone was approaching from the direction in which the constable should have been working his beat, he entered the churchyard and disappeared from sight.

"X" now came from cover, thinking that as the sergeant had found the trail and was on the scent, he had better show himself. Going over to the gates and looking down the path, an extraordinary sight met his gaze. But for the fact that he knew that he himself was responsible for one set of prints, he could have sworn that a man and a woman had walked together along the path. Without knowing it, the sergeant had kept almost step for step.

With a chuckle at the possibilities, "X" leaned against the gate to await the return of the sergeant. This was some time in coming. "Bones" had evidently missed the constable from his beat, and the mystery of the footprints must have been a puzzle to him that would need a lot of answering.

However, he presently reappeared, obviously in rather a nervous state of mind. Catching sight of "X," the following dialogue ensued:

Sergeant: "Where have you been, and who is the person who went down there?"

"X": "I was a short distance up the road when I saw you enter the churchyard; it's nothing to do with me who you had with you."

Sergeant: "There was nobody with me—don't you dare suggest it."

"X": "I'm not going to suggest anything, Sergeant—it's not my business."

Sergeant: "I tell you there was nobody with me, you scoundrel. I dare you to say there was."

"X": "I promise you I won't say a word, Sergeant. *I haven't seen you come out if you like!*"

At this last thrust, poor "Bones" became almost demented, raving and threatening all sorts of punishment if "X" didn't tell him who the person was. At this, the constable suggested they should go down the path and find the person before the inspector came along.

"I don't care a snap about the inspector," shouted "Bones," "I'm going to find out who it was from you. It's a woman, and she must have been down there with someone, and who else could it be but you?"

"They're your footprints, Sergeant," said "X."

A further outburst from "Bones" was prevented by the arrival of the inspector.

"What on earth's the matter, Sergeant?" he said. "I could hear your voice from the other end of the street."

"Well, sir, I've been looking for this constable for over an hour, and when I get here, I find he's been in the churchyard with someone. He denies it, and refuses to say who it was."

"Are these your footprints, constable?"

"No, sir; the large ones—the very large ones—are the sergeant's."

"If you've been down there, sergeant, you should know who the person is. There are only two sets of prints, and one belongs to a woman—it's not a matter to be treated lightly."

But the sergeant could give no explanation, and his superior suggested a visit to the stoke-hole.

"You stay here," he said to "X," "and if the man on the opposite beat comes along, tell him I want to see him. Come along, Sergeant."

The sergeant definitely did not want to "come along," but the inspector insisted, and off they went down the path. A few minutes later the man on the other beat came along, and was sent to join them according to instructions.

All this, of course, added fresh footprints, and rather destroyed the original effect, and a little later "X" had a shock all to himself, for looking through the gates, he saw the three officers returning and with them—a woman! Had they found one there after all? As a matter of fact, it was the Vicar's housekeeper, who, disturbed by the unusual noise and the sound of voices, had come down to see what it was all about.

Also, as it appeared from her conversation, she had missed a pair of boots, but very fortunately for "X" no one seemed to connect this fact with the footprints. She insisted on a full investigation, however, and this the inspector promised, but "Bones" had fallen strangely silent, letting matters take their own course, until the inspector made an entirely new suggestion about the footprints.

"Well, Sergeant," said the inspector, "if there was no one with you, and you saw no one when you went to the stoke-hole, you must have gone there with a *ghost*. It will be for you to answer when I hand the case over to the C.I.D. in the morning. But tell me, Sergeant, I suppose you didn't happen to *see* the ghost?"

At this "Bones" nearly collapsed. "Ghost," he muttered feebly, and turning, ran down the street. He attended the inquiry in the morning, but could give no information about the woman's footprints, all traces of which had, of course, disappeared before the investigation began.

Poor "Bones"! From that day onwards he would never even go down the street on the same side as the

vicarage, and ever afterwards he was known to all and sundry as "Bones's Ghost."

A sequel to the foot impression may be found in the evidence given at a murder trial some years ago. The victim had been done to death in her own house by someone who had visited her, and the evidence on which the prosecution relied to prove the case consisted of footprints which they endeavoured to prove were made by the accused man.

There was no doubt that the boots produced belonged to the prisoner, and fitted the prints, but he was acquitted for want of substantiating evidence.

It is true that the footprints were made by someone passing to and from the prisoner's house, but to my mind the evidence, had it been weaved differently, would have proved the prisoner's wife to have been the guilty person.

CHAPTER VI

WINTER PATROLS

The path to the C I D —Difficulty in judging character—Instance of the murderer and his dog—Criminals and their *nom-de-plumes*—"Tommy the Guesser"—"Sixei"—"Jim the Penman"—"Mog the Man"—"The Duchess of Whitechapel"—"The Garroters"

THE heading of this chapter would appear to be more applicable to the Canadian Mounted Police or the North-west Frontier than to the London Metropolitan Police. It refers, however, to a duty which, to my mind, is the most important and instructive on which a young officer can be engaged.

Winter patrols are men selected from the uniform branch, and employed in plain clothes during the winter months to do duty with officers of the C.I.D. Commencing usually about the beginning of October, and continuing up to the end of March, they patrol the streets during the evenings and nights under the directions of the Criminal Investigation officers.

Should a young constable possess any ability in actual detective work, now is his opportunity to prove his worth. He does not have to worry himself about the investigating of any crime, his duty being to keep his eyes open for any suspicious job—little or big—that may *need* investigating.

Eager to show their mettle in the company of their more experienced brethren, young constables soon develop an extraordinary knowledge of local criminals, of whom there were more than enough in my day in our particular district.

During the three seasons I was employed on this duty, I came into contact with every type of criminal: murderers, burglars, housebreakers, highwaymen, horse thieves, dog thieves, van thieves, pickpockets, "snatchers," "draggers" and garroters, in addition to the less violent forger, fraud, imposter, pimp and crimp.

Whilst I came into close touch with, and even arrested,

offenders for the majority of the above offences, it was not my duty to investigate a charge of murder: nor did I ever actually arrest a person for that terrible crime until I was permanently appointed to the C.I.D., when I was responsible, as this history will show, for many such arrests. As a matter of fact, no officer below the rank of inspector was allowed to charge a person with murder.

In the favourable circumstances provided by this class of work it would probably be taken for granted that I soon became a very good judge of character, and I have often been asked if this was so. My answer to this is, that without some real knowledge of a person, it is impossible to make any safe deduction as to their distinctive qualities—good or bad. It was not my intention to carry my story so far, but I find so many instances passing through my mind in support of my theory that I must, at least, refer to one.

I had often seen the man in question in the company of people whose reputation was anything but good, and since birds of a feather certainly do flock together, I naturally came to look upon him as a suspected person. One day I came face to face with him at the main entrance of the London Hospital in Whitechapel. He was coming up the steps, and under his arm he carried a poor wretched-looking terrier.

“What’s the matter with your dog?” I asked.

“It don’t belong to me, poor little beggar,” he replied; “it’s just been run over, and I’d have liked to have got hold of the fellow who did it.”

“Well, it’s no good bringing it here,” I said. “This isn’t the place for it.”

He wouldn’t be dissuaded from his purpose, however, and I followed him into the receiving-room, interested to see what would happen. Removing his cap almost reverently, he was moving to the centre of the room when he was stopped by one of the doctors, who asked him what he wanted.

“Can you do anything for this, doctor?” he asked, holding out the pathetic-looking animal. The man’s face looked so piteous that the doctor hardly knew whether to laugh or be serious.

“Well,” he said, “we have no bed for him, but a little dressing may do that bad leg some good.”

Interested with the novelty of a canine patient, doctors

and nurses took it to the accident ward, where, with much difficulty, two of its legs were put in splints, but not before its rescuer had been so badly bitten that he had to have his hand cauterised. The man placed a piece of silver in the hospital box, and was about to leave, when the doctor asked him his name.

"My name," he said. "Ask him," pointing to me; "I'm known to all his people." Now I knew the man well, and had had him under observation many a time, but his name was something I did *not* know, but was very anxious to learn, because as one of the six young constables on Winter Patrol I always endeavoured to have a better knowledge of suspects than the regular C.I.D. men had.

However, the man knowing that I knew him, and had been watching him for some time, evidently thought I knew his name, too, and so supplied the information himself.

"I'm Billy Meers," he said.

I was astounded. The name was one that came up daily in our gossip at the station, but I had never identified it with this man.

In describing him I can only place him as one of many of similar appearance to be found in the East End of London; no special characteristics except that his somewhat narrow head might suggest him to be of a pacific nature, not easily provoked to anger and certainly showing no tendencies to violence.

At that time he would be about twenty-five years of age, medium height and build, shabbily dressed, but usually wearing a black silk scarf, neatly tied in a double knot, with the ends fastened back under the braces. This scarf might be said to be the only noticeable thing about him.

Having thus described the man, and taking into consideration the story of the dog, who, without some further personal knowledge, would suspect this man of being a murderer? Yet either at the Old Bailey or the Maidstone Assizes, Billy Meers (though under another name) stood his trial on the capital charge, though after a long hearing he was acquitted.

Billy often took the "bank" in a back alley faro den. One night during a dispute the lamp was overturned and the cash-box stolen. In the darkness Billy "claimed" one of the gang (it was a "put-up" job, as they feared him too much to attack him openly), but not being certain

that he was the leader, let him go while swearing vengeance on the remainder.

A fortnight later Billy was invited to join a party, ostensibly for an outing in the harvest fields. Actually, to use an Americanism, he was to be taken "for a ride." He accepted the invitation, for though he was suspicious, he had no fear. They provided him with food and drink in plenty, and, as he told me years later, all went well, except for the behaviour of two men who were strangers to him. They were from another district, and doubtless because of his threats on the night of the faro "bank" incident had been brought in to put Billy "on the spot."

Trouble commenced with an invitation to fight, which Billy accepted, and he was getting the best of it when the man drew a knife. It was an ugly-looking thing, but as Meers told me afterwards, "I always carried a good 'un myself."

He used his "good 'un" to such terrible effect that his adversary was stabbed to death, and how he managed to secure an acquittal in the face of all the available evidence is quite inexplicable to me.

Less than two years later this *harmless*, pacific-looking man was again charged with taking the life of another, this time the indictment being reduced to one of manslaughter, but he was again acquitted.

How many times Meers was charged with various offences it would be hard to say, though, strangely enough, I never knew him to be knowingly connected with a case of theft.

It must not be thought that he always came "out on top," nor was he free from molestation; in fact he had some fearful hidings in the course of his nefarious career.

I remember once meeting him with his face shockingly bruised and his jaws strapped up with plaster. As well as his injuries would allow, he explained to me that he had been held up in the dark by two men, the while a third beat him with a life-preserver.

"I'm looking for Cokey Jim," he said, "he put it up for me, and as I can't fight him while I'm like this, I've got a 'squirter'" (revolver); at which he tapped his pocket meaningly.

I really didn't think that Billy was on murder intent, for at the very moment when he spoke of having a revolver,

he gave a handful of coppers to a poor old woman who happened to be passing. "Rest her soul," he said, lifting his hat.

I watched him down the short street till he turned the corner, and was just about to pass on when I heard the report of a revolver. Billy had seen the man he was looking for, and had shot at him, but, as I heard afterwards, in his weak and excited condition, he fell. His intended victim escaped, and though Billy was taken into custody, he could only be charged with "discharging fire-arms," the other man absolutely refusing to "come copper" or, in other words, to be a prosecutor.

This, of course, was quite a usual thing in the East End, and has its present-day reflection in the American gangster crimes, when either the fear of reprisals, or a distorted loyalty, is sufficient to keep a man's mouth shut.

Billy got off with a fine.

So much might be said of this man that a whole book might be written round him, and before leaving Billy Meers I would like to recount just one more of my experiences with him.

I was passing one day through Dorset Street, Spitalfields, then one of London's worst crime streets—in fact, it was a toss-up whether it, or Ratcliffe Highway, could claim the honour of being the worst. Dorset Street was better known to local people as "the do as you please" and it quite justified its title, as the dwellers therein certainly did do as they pleased, and it was seeking trouble to go there looking for anything or anybody, unless, of course, you were called there, and even then you could be fairly certain of getting a great deal more than you bargained for.

On this occasion I was nearing the end of the street, when I was startled to see a man nearly fall from a street door, then scramble up again, and dash across the narrow road, just as something flashed behind him and struck the shop shutters on the opposite side. Immediately following this, a man whom I recognised as Billy Meers emerged from the house.

"Blimey, governor," he said, when he saw me, "I'm glad it didn't hit yer. It was meant for that 'Squibby.' He's just been in here, threatening me with a 'chiv' (knife), but when he saw me pick up a bigger one, he scooted; I just missed him."

"Squibby" was another well-known character in those parts, and had been charged more than once for using the knife, and had been at death's door himself as the result of being stabbed.

We crossed the road, and I found a butcher's knife with a foot-long blade sticking perfectly straight in the shutter, the point having passed right through and broken the window on the other side. It had missed "Squibby" by a few feet, and me by as many inches, but as it was not meant for me, and as the man for whom it was intended was not likely to make any complaint, there the matter ended.

I took this opportunity to ask Billy what he did with the dog he had taken to the London Hospital. Here is his answer in his own words:

"I kept 'im so long as there was a chance of 'is legs getting right, but when I saw there wasn't, the poor little — 'ad to go. I 'adn't got the 'eart to do 'im in meself, so I gave a feller a couple of bob to take 'im to the Dogs' 'Ome, and 'ave 'im put quietly away."

This from a man who had stood his trial for both murder and manslaughter! Of what use is it to talk about being a "judge of character"?

I have given some space to Billy Meers, but there were many others with whom I came in contact about whom I could relate similar experiences; certainly no one could have more facilities and opportunities of gaining an inside knowledge of the daily lives of these people than the men employed as Winter Patrols.

We had our daily conference either before or after duty, and attended the local police courts—Old Street and Thames—where men, women, and children (there were no juvenile courts in those days) were literally herded together before appearing before the magistrates.

At these courts I have seen as many as 150 cases disposed of before lunch, and scores of remand cases afterwards. The Courts sat every day (except Sunday and Christmas Day) and were a veritable storehouse of knowledge to the young policeman. Here we studied both character and description; since as there were no finger-prints taken in those days we had to fall back, for means of identification, on a kind of system of scars, peculiarities,

and marks—tattoo marks especially. Names were useless—real names, that is—for the old hands were much too “fly” to use the same name twice.

Thus a previous knowledge of these people was useful, but most important of all was a knowledge of their *nom de plumes*, or nicknames, for these followed them from district to district and more often than not were tattooed on their bodies.

At the moment of writing this story a man called at my house and asked to see me. Going to find out his errand, I found at the door a big, hefty man of about sixty years of age with black beard turning grey. I didn't know him, and waited for him to speak.

“Well, guv'nor, you don't alter a bit,” he said familiarly. “How are you? I thought I must come to see you. It's a good many years since you ‘nicked’ me, but I've forgotten all about that, and, anyway, it was my own fault.”

There was nothing in the man's appearance to help me to place him, and before I could ask he said, “I'm ‘Tommy’—don't you remember me?”

“‘Tommy’?” I queried—“‘Tommy the Guesser’?”

“Yes,” he answered, “I'm the ‘Guesser.’”

I hadn't seen “Tommy” for twenty years and more, and I had never known his real name, but even after all these years his nickname enabled me to place him at once, and was, in fact, the only means by which I could remember him. I knew his history and invited him in.

He told me he had recently returned from Chicago, where he had been when the Great War drew America into the “melting-pot.” He got through the War all right and, returning to Chicago, for a time made money (he omitted to say how), but explained that it was now impossible for anyone from the old country to do any good there.

“I've done almost everything,” he went on, “but I could never bring myself to do a poor — in.”

Possibly this laudable squeamishness was a very good reason for his failing to make good in Chicago. Anyhow, “Tommy” paused and, lifting his hat, said, in a way peculiar to men of his kind, and which reminded me of Billy Meers, “Rest their souls.”

He mentioned a score of nicknames which were familiar to me in the past, whose owners are still “wanted” here

and who still—doubtless for this reason—remain in Chicago.

A long gossip followed, in the course of which he asked for the address of the "old Governor," by whom he meant Fred Wensley, then Chief Constable of the C.I.D. I knew that Mr. Wensley would be ready to assist him, but it would have been contrary to regulations to give his address; so giving "Tommy" what help I could we parted with a hearty handshake. "Tommy" could move from place to place at will, but any attempt to disguise himself would be unavailing. He would still be "Tommy the Guesser"—for it was tattooed on his chest.

"Sixer" was the soubriquet of another awful character with whom I came into contact during my spell of duty as a Winter Patrol. The reason for "Sixer's" nickname might have been his height; he was over six foot, but I think he got it because he was once sentenced to six months' imprisonment through being mistaken for another man whom he somewhat resembled. The actual miscreant was present in court when the sentence was pronounced, which so exasperated the prisoner that he swore he'd do another six months for him when he came out. Incidentally, the mistake having been discovered, "Sixer" didn't serve his six months—not this time at all events.

He was most eccentric at times and did some odd things. He once called at my house whilst I was on duty and so frightened my wife by his behaviour that she was convinced he was seeking me to do me some injury. He had brought a letter that he wanted me to sign. He said it was an application for a Government job, but all my wife could make out was that he apparently wanted to hang somebody.

On the principle that "thrice armed is he who gets his blow in fust," I at once set out on receipt of my wife's information to find "Sixer" and make sure it was not my blood he was after. In the early hours of the morning I found him asleep in a well-known lodging-house, known as the "Thieves' Kitchen."

Placing myself on the defensive, I gently awakened him. He leapt up with such a bound that for a moment I really believed he was making for my throat. However, he merely seized my arm and almost dragged me into the corridor. Here he produced from a belt beneath his shirt

something that had been a sheet of blue foolscap, but which now looked like a grimy old rag.

"Read that," he said, "and then sign it—it's the job of my life."

Reading the document with some difficulty I found it to be an application to the Sheriff of London for the post of Public Executioner. A more horrible and gruesome document I had never read. In it he declared his belief in his fitness to "top" (hang) any man or woman before breakfast, and giving his reasons (most suitable ones, too) why he was prepared to be hanged himself if his belief was not justified. He concluded by adding:

"Leeson will give me a reference for this."

I tried to put him off sending the letter, but he wouldn't be dissuaded, being convinced that the job was made for him. Whether he ever sent the letter I don't know, but about this time he disappeared, to turn up again in the "red-light" district of Chicago where, as I heard, he was still known as "Sixer."

Many other nicknames of notorious criminals flash through my mind as I write: "Flash Harry," "Peter Pan," "Tommy the Mixer," "Lippy," "Manchester Fred," "Glasgow Mike," the "Freezer," etc. etc., all of whom we knew where to find when we wanted them, but whose real names we never heard.

Another who, if I remember rightly, provided me with my first arrest when on Winter Patrol was "Jim the Penman," known as such because of his *modus operandi* in later life, when he became a past-master in making dupes of bank clerks and messengers.

I had been standing in the shadows of a poorly illuminated beer-house bearing the doubtful sign of "The Honest Lawyer," when I saw two suspicious-looking individuals leave it and make their way into Gold Street—another misnomer, for had you searched it from end to end you would have found precious little gold in it—and since even the poorest were not safe in those days I thought I would follow and see what they were up to.

Within a few hundred yards of the beer-house they stopped at a small house, and after apparently satisfying themselves that they were not observed they lifted the lower part of the window, and while one remained outside on watch the other entered.

Now was my opportunity and I approached quickly but quietly in the hope of catching the "crow," as the watcher is called. At the last moment, however, he saw me and, without warning his mate, bolted. I stopped at the window, and a moment later a hoarse voice whispered, "Cop hold, Tim," and out came a large case of artificial wax fruit which I obligingly took and carefully placed on the footway. Following this unexpected presentation out came thief No. 1, whose surprise on seeing me can be imagined.

I closed with him, and though he was on the small side, he gave me some trouble, and in the struggle we fell, with him undermost, bang on to the glass case, which was flattened out beyond recognition.

The owner and occupier of the house came along at this moment, and when she saw the heirloom (for that is what she called it) she called me anything but my right name. The man was taken to the station and charged, but before the magistrate the following morning the woman declared it was entirely my fault, as if I hadn't struggled with the man the case wouldn't have been broken. The prisoner was bound over, and whenever he met me afterwards he always asked me "if I had been to Covent Garden to-day."

It was this man who later became such a source of trouble to both police and bank authorities, earning for himself the name of "Jim the Penman." Usually loitering in the vicinity of a City bank, he would keep watch for some likely-looking bank clerk or messenger, and when he was satisfied he'd found one suitable he would put his cap in his pocket and, placing a pen very conspicuously behind his ear, would rush up to the dupe and say, "You've made a mistake, you've got the wrong money, come back to the bank."

Taken by surprise, his victim would hand the money over to "Jim" and follow him to the bank, where the "Penman," accompanying him audaciously right up to the counter, would say, "This clerk will attend to you," and then quietly disappear.

This sort of thing happened with monotonous regularity, and "Jim" had a long run before they caught him. When at last that did occur, however, several cases were brought against him and he was in "for keeps" for a considerable time.

It was always amusing, when Jim was *wanted*, to read

in the description: "Last seen with a pen behind his ear," but I doubt if the pen remained very long behind his ear after he had disappeared from the bank.

I remember once assisting a City of London officer to find "Jim." I took him to a house in Stepney where I believed the "Penman" to be staying with a certain woman, and sure enough when the door was opened there stood the woman I suspected. It was in the early hours of the morning and apparently she had just got out of bed. She had very little on, and there, vividly tattooed on her right arm could be seen the words "I love Jim." Of course, there are plenty of other Jims, but it seemed a good augury for our success.

"Is Jim in?" I asked. "I want to speak to him."

"Jim?" she exclaimed. "Don't know who you mean—never heard the name."

We brushed past her and went up to the bedroom, where we found the man we wanted trying to leave by the window. The woman had followed, and tearfully began to explain to "Jim" that she hadn't given him away.

"I told them . . ." she began, but he turned on her in a fit of temper.

"I heard what you told 'em," he said, "but look at your arm—'I love Jim' I wonder you don't have 'the Penman' done on the other one."

There were women, too, whose notoriety had gained them *nom de plumes*, and of these "Mog the Man" was a classic instance. Said to be the daughter of a North-country clergyman, she was certainly well educated and could hold her own with the most mixed company that ever assembled in a public bar, where she would actually go and pray.

"Mog" rarely wore a hat, but she was chiefly noticeable in that neighbourhood because of her cleanliness. With large white apron and sleeves rolled up over white arms she seldom moved far from the common lodging-house in the notorious Flower and Dean Street where, standing by the door, she would greet everyone with a cheery word.

All this, however, was when she was sober.

When she was drunk she was a "he-man" and a terror.

Stripped bare to the waist, I have seen her fight the worst Amazons of Spitalfields and Whitechapel, and despite their inborn knowledge, nearly beat the life out of them, after which she would resist the united efforts

of several policemen to remove her to the station, which they were never able to do until they had strapped her on to an ambulance.

"Mog the Man" boasted of over fifty convictions for assault and drunkenness, yet you could have safely left your watch in her care; she was as honest as the day.

Some years after I had left the service and the East End, I was walking in Kensington Gardens when I saw coming towards me a finely built woman, dressed sprucely, if I may use the expression, in the costume of a nurse and pushing a pram in which there were two babies.

Our eyes happened to meet, and I could see that she thought she knew me. I certainly did not recognise her as she stopped right in my path.

"Don't you remember me?" she asked, addressing me by name. I felt as awkward as one does in such a position. But, more the lady now than ever, she relieved my embarrassment by whispering "I'm Mog the Man."

I was really delighted to see her again, especially as it was obvious that she had put the past behind her and was leading a decent life. We had a very interesting talk and she told me the name of her employer; a name respected and esteemed, but my promise not to divulge it must be respected.

That, then, is the story of "Mog the Man."

There were others with such soubriquets as "Flash Nell," "Dynamite Mary," and "Half-pay Nancy." The last-named received her title through receiving half-pay from no less than *seven* different men—sailors—at one time.

She was presumed, of course, to be the wife of all of them, and when two or more of her "husbands" returned home from sea at the same time, as sometimes happened, it always resulted in Nancy and her male harem appearing before the "Beak" for fighting in Artichoke Alley, Ratcliffe Highway, a delightful spot where you most definitely took your life in your hands every time you entered it.

Yet another famous *lady* of those days was "The Duchess of Whitechapel," a big Dutch woman, not too honest, who was usually to be found in the vicinity of "The Duke's Head" public-house.

A little story is told at the expense of a policeman who, giving evidence against this woman at the police court, and

having heard her name coupled with the "Duke's Head," began: "I was called to the Duke and Duchess, . . ." when the magistrate interjected, "Is she a Duchess?"

"Yes," shouted the woman in the dock, "I am. I'm the Duchess of Whitechapel."

On one occasion when I had the "Duchess" under observation, she was with a man who from his general appearance and the fact that he was wearing what appeared to be a valuable chain and tie-pin, was evidently a stranger to the district. I followed well in the background, for the woman was clever and not to be easily caught.

Passing through many dark streets in the neighbourhood of the docks, they visited several public-houses bearing such non apropos names as "The Good Intent," "The Good Samaritan," and, finally, the "Live and Let Live." Satisfied apparently that the man hadn't much money, the "Duchess" decided to have his pin and, after several drinks, left the house with him and immediately got to work.

Pushing the man—who by now was beginning to feel the effects of the drink—against the wall, she pressed her head in what might have seemed an affectionate embrace against his breast, at the same time holding his hand behind his back.

Drawing quietly closer, I saw her gently withdraw her head, and there between her lips was the man's tie-pin. Before she had time to handle it, however, I had taken the pin from her lips. She had not recognised me, and in a flash, she had given me a blow in the face and was attempting to regain the pin.

They both had to go to the station, but the following evening a message came from the man saying that he declined to attend the court and give evidence, with the result that the "Duchess" was discharged on that count alone.

Later the "Duchess" became so well known in the district that she was compelled to find another happy hunting ground. Going to Chinatown she wooed and married a yellow man, but when the "Chink" discovered the sort of fish he had hooked, he decamped and went back to China.

A type of offence very rife in our district was the terrible one of garrotting, but long sentences coupled with a

determined use of the "cat" had done much to diminish the number of cases, and I think I had the last known case, at all events, where a woman was concerned.

One night I saw this woman, whom I knew as a suspect, leave a public-house in the company of a drunken man, and noticed that they were being shadowed by two other men. Quickly satisfied as to their intentions I followed and, from the woman's movements, I guessed she was trying to get the men to a convenient place where it would be safe, as she thought, for her followers to rob him.

Through a number of courts and streets they passed, finally reaching a place known as "Blood Alley," where the woman stopped and removed her hat—evidently a signal to the men. Just in time I dodged into the doorway of an empty house, for they looked round but were obviously unaware of my presence.

The two men were within a few yards of the woman and her victim, but afraid perhaps that they would not get their fair share of the plunder—for honesty among thieves is a myth—they dashed across the road and seized the man, one of them placing his knee in the victim's back and clutching his throat with both hands, gradually dragged him backwards, whilst the woman and the other man went through his pockets.

I was hoping that some assistance might come in sight as I wanted to clean up the lot, but I couldn't wait and see the poor wretch strangled, since that is what garrotting meant. So across the road I dashed, and with a stout piece of rubber which I carried as being more convenient than a long truncheon, I made the garrotter loose his hands and rendered him momentarily unconscious.

The ghoulish creature of a woman was so intent on her work that she hadn't noticed me, and fell with her victim as he dropped from the grip of her accomplice. The second man, however, was more alert, and catching me a lovely wallop on the face bolted, leaving me to deal with the others.

I got the man, of course, but for the time being the woman got away and even persuaded the dupe to go with her. Late that night, however, I arrested the woman and the second man, finding them together in a common lodging-house known as "the double," where few questions were asked in those days.

Unfortunately for my case, when the prisoners appeared

in court next day there was no prosecutor. On recovering from the drink he had doubtless realised the position he was in and, being ashamed of himself, had probably kept away purposely; I should have done the same myself. The prisoners were therefore dealt with as suspected persons.

His Worship asked me if I felt any effects from the assault, and although one of my eyes bore mute witness, I answered in favour of the prisoners, which meant that they received no punishment for it.

As a matter of fact, in those days constables were not encouraged by their superiors to prefer charges of assault. Many a time I have been both kicked and punched and have had my charge of assault declined by the inspector. The most loathsome thing I can remember was a man spitting deliberately in my face, but when reporting it to the inspector was told that trivial charges of that nature must be discouraged.

The following morning, however, this little episode came out during the hearing of the case and the magistrate, ordering the man to be charged with the offence, sentenced him to a month's hard labour.

The few instances I have cited under the heading of Winter Patrols do not in any way represent the number of arrests I made whilst engaged on this duty, but will suffice to show the reader the amount of experience they provided and the help they would give to a constable about to take up more important duties in the C.I.D.

Two outstanding illustrations of this may be found in the names of P.C. Frederick Wensley, who, as we know, became Chief Constable of the Department, and P.C. George Cornish, now senior superintendent of the "Big Five," both of whom started their careers as Patrols in the East End. Wensley has left the Force, and there certainly will be a policeman leave the Yard when Cornish follows his confrere into retirement.

CHAPTER VII

NEW DUTIES

My entry into the C.I.D.—Sir John Dickenson and Mr. Mead—The soldier and the gas meters—Queer trade appellations—"Scrounger," "Trouncer," "Rouser," "Glimmer," "Watcher"—An amazing cure.

SEVERAL promotions and transfers in the division coming together had the much desired effect of securing my entry into the Criminal Investigation Department, and I was transferred to Arbour Square Station, adjoining Thames Police Court.

Here I found plenty to do, and often appeared before the two well-known magistrates, Sir John Dickenson and Mr. Frederick Mead. These, with all respect, I soon learned were very unlike in temperament, Sir John most kind and sympathetic, while Mr. Mead, never allowing the faintest touch of sentiment to creep into his work, adjudicated strictly according to the law without fear or favour.

More than one commendation and note in favour did I receive from Sir John, but I experienced many anxious moments when giving evidence before his colleague, but any difference of opinion on his part was invariably—though not always—justified.

In a case of "White Slave Traffic" he lent me a work, *Mead and Bodkin*, dealing with the subject which helped me considerably.

I think my first inquiry at Arbour Square was in connection with a "concealment of birth" case, which brings to my mind a question put to me at a viva voce examination which I had to attend before being promoted to sergeant.

"If you were told that a woman had given birth to a child, and that the blood stains had been found in a cupboard where the child had been hidden, would that be concealment?" I was asked.

"No," was my answer; "there can be no concealment

without the child, and at present there is no proof of a child." The answer was, of course, correct.

One of my first duties in my new position was to make inquiries into the considerable trouble that was being caused by the pillaging of slot meters. Every day brought a batch of complaints, whole streets suffering from having had their meters—both penny and shilling—ruthlessly smashed and robbed. This went on to such an alarming extent that people were frightened to have them in their houses, and the Gas Company made a special request for the protection of their property.

Taking up the inquiry I found that in one area the thefts always took place during the week-ends, it being nothing to find that every house in a street had been visited and the money extracted from the meter.

The criminal, when surprised at his work, as sometimes he was, represented that he came from the gas company and broke the meter in the very presence of the occupier of the house, telling them that new meters were being supplied. This story unfortunately soon got round, and occupiers, taking advantage of it, took the opportunity to indulge in a little meter-smashing on their own account.

Keeping to one particular district, I soon secured a description which seemed to point to a foreign Jew living in Oxford Street, Stepney, and acted accordingly.

My first week-end observation drew a blank, however, and no cases were reported. Before taking up observation the following Saturday evening I visited the station to find two people reporting the loss of money from the very house I had intended to watch. I determined to be more vigilant than ever and not say a word to anyone, since, if it became generally known that I was to be on the watch, the whole street would be on the look-out—not for the thief—but for me. The whole place was populated with foreigners who always showed excitement at the smallest sign of police action.

Except that early on the Monday morning a soldier in uniform left the house adjoining the one I had under observation I saw nothing unusual, but on my return to the station I found that more meter larcenies had been reported. Quickly back again to the house I had seen the soldier leave, I made an interesting discovery.

It had a back entrance which led to a passage, and

climbing a wall on one side of this passage access could be gained to the basement of all the houses in the street. I hadn't seen the soldier go into the house during the time I had been watching and wondered how long he had been inside before my arrival, or had he perhaps entered by the back way, and if so, why?

Making my way through the passage to the house I gained entry without being seen, but I hadn't got very far before a woman screamed, and I was immediately surrounded by about twenty men, women and children, all of whom lived in this six-roomed house. Carefully, and without giving any hint as to my errand, I disclosed my identity.

I told them that I thought someone had passed through their house, and warned them that more care should be taken in securing the back at night. Thus talking I was able to edge my way further into the house, at the same time quietly seeking for any little piece of evidence that might solve the mystery of the soldier.

Extraordinary people these foreign Jews for photography; photos of every member of the family, in various positions and taken at different times of their lives, were scattered all over the place. I praised one of a soldier in uniform and asked if he was a member of the family, but he might have been in the service of the late Czar of Russia for all the information I could get from these people.

In another room, however, there was a similar photo in *carte-de-visite* form, and at a favourable moment, stretching out my hand, ostensibly to drop the ash from my cigarette, I managed to palm it. Only staying long enough after this to allay any suspicion, I smilingly took my departure.

The photograph was so small that apart from the face it seemed at first that it would be useless for identification purposes. The three buttons showing on the tunic, however, gave me an idea, and hurrying off to Scotland Yard I was able, with the assistance of the photography expert, to get reproductions of them as big as the palm of my hand.

This revealed the crest of the regiment, and at the Army Clothing Department at Pimlico I was soon able to ascertain the name and present station of the regiment.

Having obtained authority next day to leave the district,

I made for the barracks which were situated just a little way out of town. Met by the regimental sergeant-major, I was given every assistance, and was soon in possession of the name of the man I was seeking.

"It's strange," said the R.S.M., "I've just refused him a pass for this afternoon, but I'll tell him I've changed my mind and let him out, and if he's any use to you, you can keep him, for he's certainly no use here."

It was arranged that he should leave at a specified time, when I would be on hand to follow him.

The man left barracks according to schedule and walking to the railway station took a ticket for Stepney. Nothing could have been more convenient for my purpose, and I travelled in the next compartment. Having reached Stepney he again did exactly what I wanted, even to passing through Arbour Square on his way home.

He got no further than the station, however, for having saved me possibly endless trouble in arresting him and probably struggling with him, I just tapped him on the shoulder in Arbour Square and told him I was going to detain him on suspicion of being connected with a number of larcenies. He made no answer to the charge, but protested strongly at being arrested whilst in uniform; it was an outrage he declared and dared the station officer to detain him.

Nothing could suit my purpose better than he should change into civilian clothes, and I suggested that I should inform his friends. He fell right into it, and I went to the house and told his people to bring his clothes. He had only one suit which he wore on leave, and when this was produced it proved to be so conspicuous that it agreed with the description given by about a dozen witnesses.

In uniform I doubt if he would ever have been picked out, but placed with a number of other men of similar appearance to himself he was identified for cases of theft from meters in nearly every street in the district. Sewn in the piping of his trousers was a steel rod of about nine inches in length, which he had evidently used for wrenching off meter locks.

Considerable difficulty arose as to his nationality, the magistrate wishing to recommend him for deportation, but we were never able to establish which country had the doubtful honour of owning him as a native. He had twisted

his name from David Morisky to Dai Morris, the sergeant-major of his regiment believing him to be a Welshman.

However, with his conviction we were free from gas-meter trouble for some time.

I propose to include in this chapter—since it has been a short one—some information about a few of the queer trade appellations that obtain in the East End, which I hope may prove of interest.

First then the “scrounger,” the abhorrence of the householder, the sworn adversary of the street cleaner, the robber of the dustman.

Night or morning, at whatever time you put out your dustbin, he descends from nowhere and, swooping on it like a vulture, overturns it in your doorway. By his wanton sorting of the refuse, which cast to the winds makes untidy streets, he raises the unholy ire of the scavenger, and by his thorough sorting of its contents he robs the dustman of his legitimate perquisites.

“Trouncer.” This—according to my sixpenny dictionary—is taken from the verb “to trounce,” meaning “to beat severely,” but in the East End his title can be traced back to what is now known as a “vanguard,” still used by certain brewery firms. The “trouncer’s” job is threefold: (a) to sit at the back of the brewer’s dray and prevent the removal of the bungs from the casks; (b) to assist in unloading the beer; and (c) to urge on the horses. I knew of a master carman in the East End who employed a “trouncer” whose soubriquet was “Tommy Never Done,” and whose motto was, “I’ll find the horses, and you find the whip.” In those days of horse-drawn vehicles, both carman and “trouncer” were expected to have whips, and could not hope for a job without one.

I once approached this particular master carman on behalf of the Prisoners’ Aid Society to know if he would find employment for discharged convicts. His answer was that his own men were so good at stealing themselves that he didn’t think the convicts could teach them anything, and so would be of no use to him.

“Rouser.” A man who calls the hour of the night for the benefit of the people, who by paying a few coppers a week ensure themselves against being late for work. In my early days policemen used to do much of this calling, but police duty is not what it was.

My impression of the "rouser" as last I saw him is that of a frowsy little man scurrying into Angel Alley, armed with a long-throated whip, a three-length fishing rod, and a pea-shooter. His first "rousing" was at a two-storey house, where he cleverly used his whip to slash the second-floor window.

"Right," came the drowsy answer from within.

Hurrying into Artichoke Court, he extended his rod and flapped the top garret window, being answered by the lighting of a candle. He was now interrupted by a sudden S.O.S. from a window opposite, when a voice, anxiously asking for the correct time, received an answer which is entirely unprintable. I presume that this customer was in arrears in the payment of the "rouser's" salary.

The last call was one that looked impossible. It was a top back room window situated between two other houses. Nothing daunted, the "rouser" produced a handful of peas from his pocket, and with his pea-shooter blew forth a volley with such deadly accuracy that I thought he had broken the window.

But all was well, and the peas, rattling on the glass like hailstones, instantly brought an answering shout from inside.

"Glimmer." Ascribed to the beggar, but whether of his own making, or in some way connected with the actual word, I have never been able to find out. I remember once, however, being present in the station when a man was being charged with begging, and an argument arose as to the prisoner's occupation.

"What's your occupation?" said the station officer.

"Wod der yer mean by occupation?"

"Well, what do you do for a living?"

"Begging."

"That's not an occupation," answered the officer.

"Well, put me down as a glimmer—that's how I get my living."

The officer, who was new to the district, fell for it, and quite innocently described the man as a "glimmer."

Appearing before the magistrate, the prisoner's calling evidently struck the learned gentleman as being unusual.

"I see by the charge sheet," said he, "that you are described as a 'glimmer.' Perhaps you can explain that."

"Well, sir," answered the weedy one, "there was just

a glimmer of hope that the lady was going to give me a copper, when the other 'copper' comes along and 'knocks me orf.' "

" Watcher." According to the Hebrew law, the dead may never be left unattended, and from the time of passing away to the moment of burial they are kept under observation. This duty is performed by individuals called " watchers."

In the London Hospital, where the Jews have their own wards, there are two or more " watchers " in regular attendance. It was a Mr. and Mrs. Levy, I believe, acting in that capacity when I myself was a patient in the hospital. They used to visit me, not with any idea of subsequent " watching," for it was not a Jewish ward, but purely out of sympathy.

Strangely enough, however, a Jewish patient named Ben Phillips came to the ward, preparatory to an operation, and occupied a bed opposite mine, just outside the doorway. Ben, or Benny as he was better known, had known me for many years and now sought to be very friendly. He would shout Yiddish stories across the ward hoping to amuse me, and invariably incurred a reprimand from the nurse, since, owing to hæmorrhage, I was forbidden to talk.

It was about the third night after Benny's arrival that the " watchers " were brought most vividly to my notice. The lights had just been put out for the night, and the patients quietly saying good night, when we were all startled by someone calling " Benny, Benny." The voice came from the door in a sort of wail or lament.

" Benny, Benny," came the strange call again, and perhaps because my name is Ben, I turned my head towards the door. There stood the " watchers." I can almost see them now, the man with a strange kind of smoking cap or fez perched on top of the curls that hung down over his ears. Their appearance caused a sort of creepy feeling to run right through me—they looked like ghouls, and looking at my opposite number I noticed that he had gone deathly pale. What followed almost beggars description.

" Benny, Benny my boy," came the eerie wail again, and then in ghostly tones:

" Ve vatch your father, ve vatch your mother, and now ve come to vatch our little Benny."

" I'll watch you don't," shrieked my namesake, and

with one leap he jumped clean out of the bed and ran down the ward shrieking for his clothes. When I tell you that Benny was six foot in height, and our only attire consisted of an extremely short red shirt, you will realise that the spectacle he presented was a truly amazing one.

Somehow or other he succeeded in getting out of the hospital that night, and never returned. The "watchers" had been a little previous, for when I saw him months later he told me that their behaviour had cured him, for he had felt nothing of his trouble from that night.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SIBERIAN GOLD DUST FRAUDS

Concerning the birth of "suckers"—*Modus operandi*—Officers of the Cossack Guards—A sad story—Receiving the samples—Juvenile assistants—Inspector as City merchant—The trap—A chase in a van—Duplicity to the last—Brass filings!

IT was Phineas T. Barnum, the world-renowned showman, to whom we are indebted for the caption, "There is a ' sucker ' born every minute," and the story I have to relate of the two foreigners who were responsible for the " ramp " that I have called the " Siberian Gold Dust Frauds " amply bears out the opinion of that very great man.

Nothing that I can say can illustrate better the amazing way in which the foreigners in question played on the credulity of the public than by recording the fact that when a certain East End pawnbroker applied for a warrant for their arrest, the magistrate refused it on the grounds that he must have been reading fairy tales.

However, knowing that pawnbroker as I did, and knowing him to be one of the last persons in the world likely to let his imagination run away with him, I did not agree with the magistrate, but took a statement from the man, which later was to assist materially in laying bare a sensational story of fraud, and which finally was the cause of bringing the two men concerned to justice.

I came into close contact with the two crooks, and it was amazing to me how these two men—absolutely illiterate foreigners—could yet have been so suave, so gifted with imagination as to be able to defraud countless sensible people with a story that shouldn't have deceived a self-respecting marine.

Their *modus operandi* was to approach some small tradesman—usually by a letter in which they set forth an alluring story telling of their exile to Siberia, their sufferings

in the mines, and finally their attempt, in company with many comrades, at escape, an attempt which ended tragically, for with the exception of their two selves every man was either shot down or, having been captured, sentenced to death. They alone had escaped with their lives, and, finally evading their prison guards, had made their way to England.

One of them declared himself to be a captain in the Czar's famous regiment of Cossacks, the other posing as his ex-aide-de-camp, while both of them—so their story went—had been banished for life to the dreaded Siberian mines for having offended members of the Imperial family.

The "captain," because of his once exalted position, had been given a responsible job in the mines which materially assisted him to effect his escape. Before doing this, however, he had arranged secretly with certain officials to pass large quantities of gold dust from the mines over the Russian border, where it was to be met by agents and brought to England to await the "captain's" coming. They were, of course, prepared to sell it at a price which would give the purchaser a fabulous profit.

This then was their story, and how anyone, after listening for five minutes to the captain and his aide-de-camp, could have swallowed it and bought the precious "dust" passes my comprehension. But buy it they did, in all directions.

Time after time we had news of people who had been defrauded, but they were all reluctant to come forward, and I have already related what happened to the one man—the pawnbroker—who was willing to bring a charge. This being the case, we decided on the unusual course of attempting to make a purchase ourselves—through the police, that is—and as I had had the most to do with the matter, it was left to me to make the best arrangements to effect our purchase.

This was not so easy as it may appear. To have tried to make a purchase on my own account could, of course, only end in disaster, and so by wading through the mass of correspondence relating to the many victims of the precious pair I found a man who, I thought, might be prepared to help me. This he agreed to do, provided his name was kept out of the business.

I was only too glad to agree to this condition, since the

amateur detective, however keen he may be, doesn't understand the value of evidence, and in his anxiety to do the right thing is apt to fall "in the soup," taking everybody concerned with him.

Having got into touch with the crooks, my assistant, a man in a very good position and whom we will call "Jones," was first to represent that his firm might be prepared to do business, and having by this means secured some knowledge of the men was to switch them over to us.

Jones's first meeting was an exciting affair, every ruse being adopted and every precaution taken by the two men to test him and to make sure they were not being shadowed. When he left them he soon discovered they were shadowing *him*, and had to go half-way round London before he could shake them off.

It was at this meeting that he was to receive a "sample," and carrying out his instructions to the letter, he turned up at the appointed place, after having "lost" the crooks, bringing it with him. The "sample" resembled the kernel of a walnut, and on being tested was found to be 22-carat gold, which was, of course, only to be expected.

I had hoped that at this meeting he would have been able to secure the names and addresses of the two men, but they were much too wily, and another meeting had to be arranged, this time in a synagogue of all places. This meeting, however, proved abortive. Whether they were suspicious or not I don't know, but while we watched in the rain near the door at which they had gone *in* they simply passed through and went *out* on the other side.

Meeting No. 3 (which was to produce the second sample) was fixed by our Siberian friends to take place in a quiet square in the neighbourhood of Bow, at which place our agent was to be waiting. To make sure that he was not accompanied by anyone they remained on the other side of the square till he approached them.

They then shook hands, and, passing the "sample" at the same time, hurried away. Apparently satisfied that they were free from any police or other observation they separated and went in different directions, only to join up again in another street.

They had, however, reckoned without just one small unsuspecting-looking thing, and that was the presence of two small boys innocently kicking a ball about in the street.

These boys, still kicking the ball, followed the men, and seeing them board a tramcar promptly followed suit. The car carried the suspects to Aldgate, where they alighted and immediately jumped on another, which brought them back over the same course to within a short distance of the meeting-place. Here they entered a house.

Very clever, and doubtless they thought they had successfully covered up their tracks, but within an hour of their meeting with our agent, one of the boys had brought me all the information I wanted, his little friend—a very keen detective mind—remaining behind to see if our gentlemen left for another address.

Hurrying to the spot, I found the lad still keeping watch. He saw me and followed to a spot where it was safe to discuss the situation.

It was arranged that he should go back and try if possible to find out the one thing we wanted to know—what was going on inside the house. No easy job for a small boy, you would say. I agree; but he managed it.

Playing with his ball it fell *by chance* into the area of that very house, and when he knocked and asked for his ball the woman who opened the door, not suspecting a small boy, very kindly agreed to go to the area and get it for him. Quite innocently the boy followed part of the way, and meeting the woman by the stairs received back his ball. He had, however, seen the two rogues busily engaged in a small workshop in the backyard, and though he was not close enough to see what they were doing it was sufficient for us.

And now came the most difficult part of the business, for having provided our agent with samples, not a step further would the two men go without meeting his employer, who, they had been given to understand, was a City merchant. And now we had to find someone to fill this role. Who was it to be?

He must be a shrewd and clever person with a knowledge of the law, one who would not only not make mistakes, but who would not easily be drawn into a trap that might involve us all. The choice fell on Detective Inspector Wensley (as he was then), a man suitable in every way, and who at once accepted the position of City merchant and buyer of Siberian gold dust.

The men, as far as we knew, had never seen Wensley,

but it would not be safe to try to carry this business through in the East End. A house was accordingly rented in Camberwell, and there, comfortably ensconced in an easy chair, with open cheque book on the table by his side, sat our pseudo-merchant, awaiting the arrival of Jones and his two philanthropic friends.

Entering the room the men looked carefully round to make certain they were not being trapped, but apparently satisfied that all promised well for their dirty work they led off by asking Wensley if he could keep a secret. He answered them that he could, and they certainly had confirmation of that assurance before they were many hours older. How delighted they were to make his acquaintance and secure his confidence! They had, they told him, sold all their dust for years to a City gentleman who had come to affluence through his dealings with them, but, sad to relate, he had died, leaving on their hands a large quantity of dust.

Anybody, of course, would be glad to buy it, but they were very careful as to whom they did business with. So careful indeed were they that they had only brought another sample with them. This they produced, together with a bottle of aqua-fortis, insisting that the sample should be tested. It proved to be right up to standard, and for a very good reason which ensued later.

Wensley proved himself an excellent tactician, beating them down to a cut of 50 per cent, saying that at any higher figure he wouldn't take the risk. This made the crooks feel certain that the deal was going through, and anxiously they asked how much dust he would require, pointing out that it would be much better to buy a large quantity and so take only one risk. Everything was settled, the price to be as stated, the weight between 90 and 100 lbs., and the value between two and three thousand pounds sterling.

With the help of our juvenile assistants we had been able to secure the men's proper address, and on the day fixed for the handing over of the dust another officer and I met, well before the appointed time, in close proximity to a house in the Mile End Road, and somewhat late on a hot afternoon in summer we saw two dark shadows emerge.

Although smartly dressed, there was no mistaking them, and in any case the "captain" with his neatly trimmed beard and military bearing would be noticeable in a crowd.

For a few moments they stood in conversation and then walked in the direction of the main road. We followed at a reasonable distance and at a given signal were joined by our Chief and another officer, this latter, by the way, being the late Sergeant Sam Lee, *one of the best detectives* and also one of the most respected men in the East End.

I was beginning to wonder if the crooks had brought the dust with them, for while the weight expected would not be very bulky in gold dust, there was no sign of any parcel—outwardly, at all events. Whilst I was still wondering the men suddenly darted into the road and jumped into a hansom cab. There were no taxis in those days and at that moment no other horse-cab in sight. Fortunately for us a horse and covered van came along, and knowing the driver we ordered him to stop and climbed in.

The spectacle of four well-dressed men clambering over the tail-board of a shabby van must have caused some astonishment in the neighbourhood, but we didn't let that deter us, for after all the work we had put in on the case we weren't going to let our quarry escape us now.

It was now a race between cab and van horse, neither of which was capable perhaps of winning the Derby, but both put up sufficient speed to cause a constable to blow his whistle. The men must have suspected something I felt, as otherwise why should they have taken a cab—a quite unnecessary proceeding.

Anyhow, it altered our plans, and a hurried consultation took place in the van as it rolled from side to side. They had to be stopped before they reached the City boundary, or there would be much greater difficulties to be surmounted. Something had certainly gone wrong because their movements now were entirely different from what we had anticipated.

We were drawing nearer and nearer, and urging our horse we drew up right across their path. I do not think that more excitement, movement, and anxiety could have been crowded into the short space of time that elapsed between the moment of leaving the van and our overpowering of the two men.

There was almost a struggle as to who should be out of the van first. I just managed it, to be followed by Sergeants Girdler and Lee, and it was the latter who reached the cab with me as it was being almost forced on to the pathway.

Grabbing the horse with such strength as to bring it to its knees we came to the ground together, the driver at the same time nearly falling out of the "dickey." The "captain" fell forward and was grabbed by Lee, exclaiming at the same moment, "It's his brother," presumably tracing some likeness in the sergeant to Wensley.

The horse recovering, the driver threatened to use his whip on us, but quietened down on learning who we were, whilst the two men—now prisoners—were taken off to Leman Street Station.

Here another surprise awaited them. They came face to face with Wensley, who for his own reasons had kept out of the way till then. On seeing him they let loose a flood of invective that I have rarely heard equalled and never surpassed.

They were carefully searched and quite a remarkable collection of articles was found on them, but when no "gold dust" was forthcoming our eyes started to wander to each other across the charge-room, for it began to look as if we should have nothing more to go on than the story told to Wensley at Camberwell, and that wouldn't take us very far.

Not being satisfied, however, I took up the search myself, and removing the "captain's" shirt I came upon a neatly made kind of old-fashioned corsets. These were made of canvas and were fluted or corrugated in grooves, which appeared to be filled with some hard substance.

I dug my knife into one of them and out ran a shower of the precious metal. With a bottle of acid which had been taken from the prisoners I applied the gold test, and to my momentary dismay the stuff stood up to it perfectly. Then I had an idea; placing the bottle to my lips I found that the liquid was water which the prisoners had substituted for the acid, so taking from my own pocket a bottle of strong aqua-fortis, I poured the contents over the sparkling dust.

It was brass filings!

The men were tried and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment at the Central Criminal Court, and so ended the long series of frauds.

Many letters of confirmation reached us on the conviction of these men, but they were all anonymous, for to the end the dupes of these cunning rascals were ashamed of

their credulity. Some years later I met one of the crooks and he told me that he would rather undergo the term of imprisonment again than prepare any more gold dust.

For the benefit of our City merchant he had filed a complete set of stair rods, and for three solid weeks he had been filing, filing, filing . . . and then !!

CHAPTER IX

CHILDREN AND CRIME

Crime in its infancy—Whitechapel alleys and courts—How I fell for Jerry the old "copper"—Children in the public-houses—The need for juvenile courts—Some old "lags"—Time measured by the public-house—My visit to the house of death—The honour of a criminal.

IN what manner, I wonder, would a present-day writer describe the East End of London as I knew it forty odd years ago. However vivid his imagination I venture to say that his description would fall far short of the truth.

Try to picture, if you can, streets with pseudonyms such as Blood Alley, Shovel Alley, Frying Pan Alley, and Bull's Head Yard, remembering that all these places received their nicknames for reasons sinister enough, whilst their wretched inhabitants were a perfect match to their localities. Blood Alley—appropriate name!—was the meeting-place of a notorious gang, with which I will deal fully in another chapter.

Shovel Alley, with its score or so of dilapidated houses, or rather hovels, was a perfect hotbed of criminality and criminals. I have known children of eight and nine years of age brought from this alley to be charged with burglary, robbery, housebreaking, and in fact nearly every crime in the calendar with the exception of murder, which last they left to their elders and *bettors*.

It was only at night that policemen went through this narrow passage, whilst from 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. extra constables known as evening patrols and working always in twos, for it was unsafe to go alone, were employed.

Once, when quite a youngster, I was patrolling in this neighbourhood with an old "bobby" named Jerry Lynch when a child rushed up imploring us pitifully to come to Shovel Alley because, as she said, "father was murdering mother."

"Go on, youngster," said Jerry, "you can run faster than me."

Off I went and was quickly ahead of my mate. After racing for about two hundred yards I turned at full speed into Shovel Alley to be met with a terrific whack on the head with an iron saucepan, the force of the blow smashing it (the saucepan—not my head) to pieces. Had it not been for my helmet I doubt very much if this history would ever have been written, and even as it was my head was very badly cut.

“Never mind,” said Jerry when he came up, “it will make a man of you.” I think he had known pretty well what was coming, as he told me afterwards that the “boys” had promised to “get it up” for him. The alleyites gave very short shrift to the policeman who ventured to interfere with their innocent pleasures, and I was more cautious in future.

Except for casual employment at rare intervals at the docks or factories there was no honest work done in this district. The women spent their time in the public-houses (open at that time from 5 a.m. to half an hour after midnight), whilst the children played in the sawdust of the public bar, being encouraged at intervals to drink from the same pewter pot as their parents.

I have often seen the women in these dens peeling potatoes in preparation for their husbands’ dinners, when a dispute would arise. The cause might be the quality of the beer, the reason for their husband’s imprisonment, or perhaps just the effects of the beer itself, but whatever it was, in a moment the children were forgotten and a fight had started in which every woman in the place joined, tearing the hair from each other’s head (there was more to tear in those days than there is now), and only ceasing when all the combatants were exhausted and had had nearly every strip of clothing torn from their bodies.

Drink was the chief cause of the squalor and crime of those days, but it must be remembered that these people of the East End had very little alternative to the public-house in the way of amusement, no parks or open spaces, no cinemas or other suitable entertainment of a similar character to divert them.

The only main thoroughfares, Whitechapel and Commercial Road, were simply places of resort for the young criminal. In these roads the shop sneak and the “snatcher” invariably made his first effort in crime, and

the hue and cry of "Stop thief" was so common that nobody paid any attention to it.

"Only one of those young hooligans," someone would say, and that is about the only interest it would arouse. Crime was both cultivated and stimulated in young children. They were born into it, and incited to it every minute of their lives, and apart from the work of Dr. Barnardo and the Salvation Army there was no attempt made to remedy matters.

There were not even Juvenile Courts in those days, and I have seen small girls and boys herded together in the same cell with old convicts whilst waiting their turn to go before the magistrate.

Here they listened and learned the significance of such terms as "snowballing" (stealing wet clothes from lines in backyards), "dipping the lob" (stealing from tills), "parlour jumping" (entering through the window of the front room from the footway), "busting" (burglary), and "screwing" (house-breaking).

When convicted the punishment was either birching (no longer applied to children, of course) or a spell in an industrial school or reformatory. I have seen the inside of these places, and though I admit the extreme difficulty of dealing with juvenile offenders, I could never see any hope for the reform of the child criminal in these places.

Returning to his old haunts on his release, the boy without friends or means soon falls into evil ways, and then comes his first crime, punished perhaps by three months' hard labour, followed by a longer term for his next, until you have all the ingredients for the hardened criminal.

Education and the removal of some of the foul courts and alley-ways has done much to improve the conditions of life in the East End, but the taint remains.

Only a few days ago I was passing the corner of Leman Street, when I heard a voice say, "Why, it's Jaw-breaker," a name given to me long ago by the crooks of the underworld for having once broken a man's jaw in a fight.

Turning, I saw three creatures, who, for the want of a better term, I must call "men," though it is a travesty of the term to use it in connection with these poor wretches. I hadn't seen them for over twenty years, and but for the fact of their being together I might not have recognised them

I had never known their real names, but one was known as "Sixer" (I have referred to him before), one as "Jim, the handy man," and the third as "Tommy Demise." All three had at some time or other passed through my hands, but I didn't know life then as now I know it. I couldn't resist a gossip, and we were soon back in the days of forty years ago.

"How about a drink for the sake of old times," said "Sixer," but as I doubt if any publican in the district would have served them, I made the *amende honorable* in another way.

Since last I saw or heard of them they had each served terms of imprisonment, and though they were now almost beyond serious crime, they were so well known to the police that they dare not be seen out after dark.

"Good old thieves," they were known as, simply because they had served many sentences; clever thieves they certainly never were, and in many ways they are to be pitied, for from childhood they had never known any other mode of life.

They were anxious for me to find them something to do, "Sixer" even offering to tell his life story to a Sunday newspaper if I could arrange it. He had, he said, been in Chicago for twelve years, during which time he had been arrested as a gangster several times, but the place having become too hot for him he had worked his way home on a cattle boat.

In the drear and dismal surroundings of these East End slums, electric light and gas were then unknown, and even to this day I believe the lamp and candle to be the only illuminants in many houses. The time of day was taken from the opening and closing time of the "pubs" (which, as I have already reminded you, was then from 5 a.m. to 12.30 midnight), except for an occasional alarm clock, which usually had a very short life before it was taken to the pawnshop or to the second-hand dealer, either by the rightful owner, or by someone who had—as they used to say in the Army—"won" it.

As I have already told you, policemen were permitted—so long as it did not interfere with their duty—to call any person during the night, for which they received the sum of fourpence a week.

With almost fear and reverence, the person called would

wait for the policeman on Saturday evening to pay over the money, and then at midnight, when leaving the "pub," would roundly abuse him for a blackmailer and threaten to report him. It would be quite a different voice, however, which would hail the "flatty" in the small hours of the morning with:

"What's the time, please sir?"

"Fourpence a week," would come the reply.

"Then shure can yer tell me if the pub's open yet?"

An amusing little incident between the inspector in charge of Leman Street Station and an old Irish woman, the truth of which I can vouch for, may be worth telling. It went like this:

The woman: "I want to report a copper for hitting me son."

Inspector: "What's his name?"

The woman: "Shure an' I don't know. They call him 'Bogy.'"

Inspector: "What's his number?"

The woman: "What do yer mane by his number?"

Inspector: "What's he got on his collar?"

The woman: "Oh, it's what's he got on his collar yer want to know. He's got three ducks and a gate!"

His number was 222 H.

It must not be thought that it is my intention to make sport of or in any way ridicule these people. The many years I lived amongst them made me realise that many of their worst qualities were bred of ignorance, whilst in some ways their characters would bear favourable comparison with those of their more happily placed fellow creatures.

Honour—as distinct from honesty—among thieves is without question, for you never find the "squealer," and it is only by means of his better knowledge of the law that a detective can get a statement from these people when one of their number is in trouble. "I'll be hanged before I'll tell," is their answer to your first and last question.

I remember an instance shortly after I joined the C.I.D. Making my way home in the early hours of the morning, it was brought to my knowledge that a man long wanted for a serious offence was back in the district and had been seen that day.

Knowing that the man was married, and would probably be found with his wife and family during the night, I de-

cided on a visit to his address right away. I made my way to the house, which was in a back street off the Commercial Road, and seeing a light upstairs, tried the street door, but found it fast. Passing through the adjoining house without disturbing the inmates, I entered the first house by the back way, and made my way quietly upstairs.

Listening, I could hear voices, one that of a man, and the others of a woman and child, who appeared to be sobbing. I wondered what was wrong, as it didn't seem to be a quarrel.

After waiting in doubt for a few minutes, I put my hand on the door-knob, and as I attempted to turn it I felt it being turned on the inside. The door was thrown open by the "wanted" man, our eyes meeting at a glance.

"Do you want me?" he said quietly. "I expected it."

Whatever reply I was about to make was cut short by the sight that met my gaze.

There, to that small ten foot square room, where poverty and hunger were constant visitors, another visitor had come—grim death; for the man and his wife and little girl were watching by the side of the youngest child, who had died that morning. Cross and burning candles told the reason for the man's return home. I felt choked. "I'm sorry, Jerry," I said, as I turned to go.

The man followed me, however, and addressing me by name, said:

"I'll play the game; this is straight dealing between you and me; you can have me as soon as this is over."

A few days later I received a most unusual message to go to the office of Mr. (later Sir John) Dickenson, the magistrate at Thames Police Court. Without the smallest idea of why I was wanted, I made my way there, and on my arrival was surprised to learn that the man had given himself up, and was being interviewed by the court missionary.

I scented trouble for myself, for not only had I omitted to report the matter, but my wife had been round to the man's house and had provided them with some food, and this had come to the knowledge of the magistrate. So far from reprimanding me, however, he commended my action, and arranged for the withdrawal of the charge hanging over the unfortunate man.

Although he had gone the wrong way about it, this man

had stuck to his promise to "play the game." He was on his honour.

This is the first time I have told this story, but I am glad to have been able to do so, as it proves my contention that the dwellers in the East End slums show unexpected traits in their character when given an opportunity to do so.

A recent visit to my old haunts satisfies me that there are still slums in existence that should have been condemned forty years ago, and the landlords of these places, mostly men of alien birth, are, to my mind, greater criminals than the unfortunate wretches who have to live in them.

CHAPTER X

SHADOWING VARIOUS CHARACTERS

Receivers and their methods—The most difficult to catch—Women agents
—The famous " Cammy," " Horsehair," and " Dutch Sam "—" Sticks "
—Retribution.

THE area covered by the sound of Bow Bells is the birthplace of every true Cockney, but it can claim another not so honourable distinction, for it also contains the headquarters of the most notorious receivers of stolen goods in the country.

The district is ideal for the purpose. Tucked away in the network of small alleys with which it abounds, skilled workers are at hand to cut and remodel any precious stone, to " doctor " rich furs, to alter any dress, so that articles, even when traced to their possession, have taken on so different an appearance that identification is almost impossible.

Often a small group of these receivers—aliens for the most part—called for special attention, and I was told off to deal with them. The second-hand dealer, with dilapidated shop and back parlour, and with backyard and cellar filled with apparently worthless junk, was usually the sort of man I fixed on for my inquiry. The shop itself was, of course, a " blind," a hole where the foxy " fence " and thief met.

It was almost impossible to watch the transactions in such circumstances, and any attempt to approach the place openly would be communicated to the occupier immediately, though surprise visits did sometimes have the desired effect. One man in the old furniture business, whom I suspected, used to smuggle stuff to Hatton Garden dealers. I stopped him once, but drew a blank, and I had to exercise great care afterwards, for he reported me to my superintendent, who quite believed him to be a decent shopkeeper.

I had different ideas on the subject, and this little episode only made me more keen than ever to give the " fence "

another opportunity to meet the superintendent, which he shortly did, though this time he was in the dock.

I did not stop him the next time I saw him, and he became quite friendly, often passing the time of day, and even going so far as to invite me to have a drink. However, an idea struck me, and meeting him one day with a load, I placed myself right in his path. He immediately began to get fidgety, and with guilt written most plainly on his face, I silently bet myself a new hat that he was carrying "the goods." He was anxious to get on.

"What's the hurry this morning?" I asked.

"I'm in a hurry to get this stuff off to Shoreditch," he answered.

"Shoreditch," I said. "That reminds me. I want you to tell me something about those Cohens."

The name Cohen immediately allayed his suspicions, and he stopped.

"Ah," he said, "if you'd have asked me the other morning instead of stopping me, I could have told you then that he'd got a dozen boxes of butter 'on the quick'; they were in his shed then."

Taken off his guard, he was quite willing to talk, and I suggested that as we were near a public-house we should go inside.

Looking at his barrow he said: "This is a lot of good stuff, though you may not think much of it. Do you think it's safe for me to leave it?"

Drawing his attention to the fact that there was a constable on point duty just across the road, I led him, still very much concerned, into the "pub," where he was careful to take up a position giving him a good view of his barrow.

He was still giving me some interesting facts about Mr. Cohen and his mode of living, all of which I knew to be lies, and a subterfuge to draw my attention away from himself, when he suddenly exclaimed: "That policeman's moving my barrow."

Into the street he rushed, and before I could prevent him he had seized the constable by the arm and was trying to wrest the barrow from him. The policeman knew me, of course, and explained he had found the barrow unattended, and was taking it to the police station.

"But it's mine. The sergeant knows that."

Another struggle for the barrow, and a plea to me not to

let the constable take it to the station almost resulted in the load being overturned. We were getting quite near the station by now, and the P.C. still maintained his right to take it in, and satisfy the inspector as to its rightful ownership.

Things were shaping much better than on the last occasion on which I stopped my man, and as he had not the slightest idea what was in my mind, he finally agreed that it would be much better to go to the station than be shown up in the street. Whilst I pacified my friend as we went into the station by the front entrance the constable with the barrow went in the back way.

Telling the "fence" to wait a moment while I spoke to the inspector, I hurried round to the back, and together with the constable examined the contents of the barrow. I had guessed right this time, for carefully placed in a sack at the bottom of a chest of drawers was the "swag." It was not such a lucky haul as I had hoped for, as, instead of the jewellery I had expected, it consisted of about twenty pounds of solid silver, which proved on examination to be flattened remains of thirteen silver cups and trophies, all of which bore the owner's name and date of presentation.

I returned to the "receiver" and requested him to come and identify his property to the satisfaction of the inspector, whom I had in the meantime "put wise" as to what was going on. My "fence" was quiet enough at the start, but when asked to account for the silver, he flew into a rage, first denying all knowledge of it, and then accusing me of putting it there.

Inquiries connected the stuff with part of the proceeds of a burglary which had taken place at a house in a London suburb, during the absence on holiday of the occupier.

At the police court next morning the "fence," who was a Russian, gave his name as John Brown, and was promptly rebuked by His Worship for slandering a great name. However, he listened patiently until he heard the constable say that when he took the barrow to the station he was acting under the instructions of Sergeant Leeson. That was too much for him, and he broke out into a torrent of words, endeavouring to assure the Court that as I had stopped him once before and been unsuccessful, I had put this job up.

Subsequently, however, when committed for trial, he pleaded guilty and was sent to hard labour.

If undisturbed, and moderately successful, the ordinary receiver is soon able to enlarge his scope of activities and ensure a goodly supply of stolen property coming into his hands. He then becomes ultra-cautious and cunning, changing his methods with every deal. It was very necessary for them that they should, for the police of those days had declared war on them, and no quarter was given once we were able to establish the whereabouts of their dens.

We had many serious crimes to cope with in our district: anarchism, counterfeiting, burglary, and housebreaking, and our numbers were much smaller in those days, but we never "let-up" on the receivers, for where there are "fences" there will be thieves.

One of the things the small receiver was careful about once he had developed into the practical "fence" was never to deal direct with the actual thief. Everything had to be arranged through an agent. In three particular instances that I can recall, the agent was a woman, and even the Post Office officials were sometimes unconscious allies in the nefarious work.

By sticking to their rules, they sometimes made fortunes and kept out of our hands for years, and then cocksureness would prove their undoing, and in the end they all fell into the net spread wide for them, and finished up either "broke" or in prison.

One of the first and most cunning of the "fences" with whom I came in contact was a man called "Cammy." Why Cammy I don't know, but that was the name by which he was always known, and which will answer the purpose for this story.

A shrewd man of fair education and good personality, with a wonderful knowledge of diamonds, he was generally known as a diamond dealer, which was an excellent "blind" for his more important activities.

Shadowing a crook with the idea of being led thus to "Cammy" would lead you nowhere, except to disaster. He only did business with men he knew and could trust; the smaller fry he wouldn't recognise; and in any case no stolen property would be found in possession of these men. If successful in making a deal, the rest of the business would be left to the woman agent.

Of course I knew "Cammy"—it was my business to know all such characters—but amongst "fences" he was outstanding, and a story from him, "How I fell amongst thieves," would make good reading. Once a receiver does his first deal, he has to keep on, there is no escaping, for he is in the hands of the thief.

My first contact with "Cammy" and his agent occurred when making a confidential inquiry about another matter at pawnbrokers and jewellers. Entering a shop in the Whitechapel Road, I overheard a conversation in an adjoining compartment, where a woman was offering something for pledge. She was twitting the assistant with not knowing his job, telling him the valuation of the article was all wrong.

Something in the conversation aroused my suspicion, and I waited impatiently for the woman to go, so that I might learn her business from the assistant. She was just about to leave, when the man peered into my compartment, and I quickly but quietly asked him what the woman had offered for pledge. He hesitated, and presumably not knowing me, said: "Why do you ask?"

Forgetting all about the inquiry that had taken me there, and wasting no further time on the assistant, I hurried into the street just in time to see the woman leaving the side entrance. She was a finely built brunette, good-looking and well dressed, and I at once recognised her as the wife of a well-known tradesman, which gave me very furiously to think, for while I was convinced she was dealing in stolen property, I had only suspicion to go on, and might easily "fall in the soup."

Had it been a man, I should have acted there and then, for there is a useful Act of Parliament known as the "Unlawful Possession Act" which empowers any police officer to detain and arrest any person in possession of property concerning which he declines to give an account.

In those days of long skirts it was a very risky thing to call upon a woman to show what she had in her pocket, and riskier still to find the bottom of it. In explanation of the latter part of this sentence I will quote an incident which occurred at a little later date.

An over-zealous officer, taking advantage of the powers conferred on him by the Act, stopped this very woman and demanded to know what she had in her pocket. She in-

dignantly refused the officer's request, saying she would rather go with him to the station. The officer having to maintain his position accompanied her there, but she now proved more obdurate, and apparently having some knowledge of the law insisted that she should be searched, and that a female searcher should do it. There was nothing to do but take her to a waiting-room and have her searched, when nothing but a handkerchief was found on her. She had to be released, and took her departure, hurling all sorts of threats at both the station officer and the one who had brought her in. Actually she was very thankful at having got away with it.

What had actually happened was that with an ingeniously arranged piece of cord she had been able to release the bottom of her deep pocket, with the result that whatever may have been in it dropped in the street.

I did not fall into the error made by my confrère, however, but following as closely as was safe on the heels of my lady friend I soon found out that she suspected herself of being shadowed. She repeatedly stopped and peered into windows, a ruse I often adopted myself when watching others, as while pretending to be interested in the goods on sale it was often possible to obtain a reflection of your quarry.

In order to allay her suspicion I crossed the road and boarded a passing car, and remaining on it till she had lost sight of me, though I still had her in view, I jumped off and kept her under observation from the opposite direction. For two solid hours she simply wasted time, not entering any place or speaking to a soul, and keen as I was, I was on the point of giving it up when she went into a post office which was in a grocery shop.

Wondering what was happening and not daring to go in and see, since that would have given the whole show away, I simply had to wait, and wait I did for fully twenty minutes, until I began to think there must be another way out through which she had effected an exit.

However, out she came at last, carrying a large parcel, which she displayed with such prominence that made me suspect it was a ruse to draw me off, especially as the parcel was most unlike a parcel of groceries. If that was her intention it failed, for, waiting till she was out of sight, I went into the shop, and the postmistress fortunately know-

ing me well I was soon able to find out what the woman had been doing during that twenty minutes. Included in her purchases had been a box of scented soap, from which the woman had taken the cardboard wrapping. She had then taken a small parcel from under her skirt and placing it in the wrapping had made a neat parcel which she registered and posted.

It was a clever move, for, though I was certain the parcel contained valuables, I dared not ask the postmistress to open it. I must have definite proof, and even then could only submit a report to the P.M.G., which, taking weeks perhaps, would be utterly useless. What I did was to note the name and address, and though neither was familiar to me, it was remarkable that the latter should be only a few hundred yards away and in the very direction for which the woman was making.

Returning to the station, I consulted my chief, and it was decided to visit the place to which the parcel was addressed. Early the following morning we ascertained that the place was rented by a man who lived in Dalston, but the owner professed himself to be ignorant of the man's name and address.

However, I took up observation from an empty house and soon got the surprise of my life, for the early bird visiting the place was none other than the redoubtable "Cammy" himself. It was about 6 a.m. when he came along, and, fortunately, I was well out of sight. He stopped right outside the suspected house, and after a careful look round took a key from his pocket and entered.

Giving him just time to get well inside, I left my hiding-place and walked boldly in after him, finding him in the act of examining the contents of a large enamelled jug, which, on hearing my footsteps, he carefully placed under a table by his side.

"Morning, guv'nor," he said, "you're about early!" He was nervous and began to bluff. "Anyhow," he went on, "what can I do for you at this early hour? I'm just going out."

"To commence with," I replied, "you might show me what's in that jug, and then after a general look round we may perhaps go up the street together."

"I can't very well let you look round," he said, "as the

place doesn't belong to me; but if you like to come as far as Dalston Lane, I'll see if I can find the owner."

But a lesson taught me many times was, that having caught your bird, see that you keep hold of it.

"I shall be pleased to see the gentleman if it becomes necessary, but for the moment you are in possession, and possession being nine points of the law, we'll just close the door and look round together."

"Cammy" protested vigorously and, putting himself in a defiant attitude, threatened that the matter would be reported to the Commissioner if I dared to touch a thing in the place.

I noticed that he had left the key in the door, so taking it out I secured the door on the inside and put the key in my pocket. "Cammy" was a big man, but size didn't trouble me so long as I knew them, and anyway I had met bigger. Remembering, however, that he was reported to carry a revolver at all times, I kept my eye on a large hammer that happened to be handy.

"Now then," I began, "first I'm going to see what's in that jug, so please hand it over."

"Do what you like," he snapped, "but I'm warning you the place doesn't belong to me, and if anything's missing you'll be responsible."

"I'll take the consequence," I said, and, stepping forward, seized the jug.

I had such a surprise that I nearly overbalanced, for the jug was about 12 lbs. in weight, and its awkward position necessitated my using both hands to pull it out. Peering inside it I got surprise No. 2, for it was full of gold rings from which the stones had been removed.

Still protesting, "Cammy" definitely declined to make any statement regarding the rings, and I took him off to the station, where he was detained pending inquiries.

It will hardly be credited, but notwithstanding the many jeweller's marks and other means of identification, we weren't able to trace a single owner, and "Cammy" went free. The address on the registered packet had actually led us to his private "dive." Luck was against us, though we had secured a lot of information that was useful for future reference.

In the fullness of time, and like all the others engaged in this class of offence, "Cammy" blundered. He dabbled

in something in which he was not an expert, and he fell.

Not content with diamonds, of which few had better knowledge, he turned his attention to pearls, though he had little knowledge of their value, and less still of the best means of disposing of them.

He was finally arrested for being concerned in the robbery of a string of pearls in transit from Hatton Garden. The pearls were valued at £100,000, but so much trouble did they cause "Cammy" that in desperation he finally threw them away in the street. There they were found in the gutter by a workman, who handed them over to the police. The robbery was traced to "Cammy," however, and following a long term of imprisonment he died a broken-hearted man.¹

"Horsehair," a very different type of man, carried on business as a "bookie," and was well known as such to the police, who frequently arrested him for street betting, and while he was suspected of receiving stolen property, he was too cunning to be easily caught. He had two known agents, Dutch Sam and Patsy—both now dead—who, while making no secret of their association with "Horsehair," were yet so clever as to make it almost impossible to arrest them. Impossible is a word I don't like using in this connection, for I always said that given time and means the police would eventually catch the best and cleverest of "fences," but as we were given very little time, and still less means, the receiver always had the pull on us.

"Horsehair" and his two associates were usually to be found in the neighbourhood of Aldgate Pump carrying on what was to all appearances an ordinary bookmaker's business. Occasionally, however, they ventured into Whitechapel Road, and one day Dutch Sam very incautiously accepted a small parcel from a man whom I knew to be a crook.

It was shadowing this man that led us to "Horsehair," with whom he had a conversation before leaving him to join Sam. The parcel contained a gold watch and chain, and as neither man could give a satisfactory account of the

¹ According to disclosures made quite recently, it would appear that "Cammy" didn't know that he was dealing with pearls on this fatal occasion, expecting the package in which he was "interested" to contain his more familiar diamonds.

articles they were both taken to the station, but only after a fight, during which I had to call for assistance.

The officer on duty believing "Horsehair's" story that he had simply been asked to value the goods, and that his address was well known, allowed him out on bail till next morning, the crook having no fixed abode being detained. Following a remand I was astonished to see another receiver go into the box and swear that the watch and chain belonged to him and that he *had* sent it to be valued.

It may seem that this man took a risk in going into the witness-box and telling what was obviously a pack of lies. Actually all that was necessary was for this confederate to wait in court to see if there was a prosecutor, or if the property had been identified, and finding neither to be the case simply went into the box and told his story.

I couldn't refute it, and as the police were not represented in such matters the magistrate had no alternative but to dismiss the case. And that is exactly what happened, for, though the crook was punished for assault, "Horsehair," much to my chagrin, was discharged.

He pulled my leg unmercifully over the business, but was very careful not to give me any further opportunities. I finally had the satisfaction of seeing him handed over to the provincial police on a charge of receiving jewellery, for which he received a long term of imprisonment.

Another "fence" with whom I came in contact was "Sticks," so called because he always carried a fancy walking-stick of curious shape.

A diamond-cutter by trade, he was without doubt a very Prince of Receivers. Give him twenty-four hours with the most difficult piece of jewellery and the stones would be re-cut and polished beyond all hope of identification.

Many times I had this man under observation, but though gaining a knowledge of his many associates I was never able to collect sufficient evidence to make an arrest. His agent—a woman—was equally cunning and never gave us an opening.

For years the two of them were suspected, and must have accumulated a fortune, but their methods were such as to defy all legal procedure, and they simply laughed at the police. I never tired of trying, however, and though not able to arrest him I was in the end the cause of his

having to leave the country, leaving behind him a fortune in stolen property.

It came about in this way. In my many attempts to track "Sticks" down I had got him nearer and nearer to his "dive," and though I had not been able to locate the actual spot I was sure of the street. Early one morning we received an urgent message with regard to some valuable stones, and I went straight to this street to keep watch. I hadn't to wait very long, for there coming straight towards me was "Sticks" himself. Anyhow, I thought, I shall get his secret "dive" if nothing more, but even as the thought came to me "Sticks" had turned and was making his way back up the street.

He had evidently spotted me, and whilst I was debating in my mind whether it would be better to follow him he jumped into a hansom—it was before the days of taxis—and drove out of sight, not, however, before I had taken the number of the cab. Scarcely had the cab disappeared before I saw, coming from the opposite direction, the woman agent.

She went straight to the only private house in the street and let herself in with a key, but a very discreet inquiry from a neighbour gave me information which showed it would be unwise to go into the house, so back I hurried to the station.

Later that day it came to my knowledge that a portion of the property had been left at Waterloo Station by a man and a woman, a description of the former tallying with that of "Sticks." Many weeks of inquiry and observation followed, but nobody ever called at Waterloo for the stolen goods, nor did "Sticks" ever return to his home address, where the cab was supposed to have taken him that day. He "doubled" on me, but fortunately I had the number of the cab.

Clever to the last, he laid low and emigrated to Chicago, and, as far as I know, never coming back to this country, finally died a broken man in a New York slum.

Through his associates I learned that "Sticks," like "Cammy," "Horsehair," and others had tried to give up the wretched game. But once in the power of the crooks that was no easy matter. Threats to "shop" (report) them to the police kept them at it till, like the proverbial pitcher,

they go once too often to the well. With care they enjoy a longer run of liberty than the average criminal, but sooner or later retribution overtakes them, and with nerves broken with the strain of years they spin a web for themselves from which there is no escape.

CHAPTER XI

GANGS AND GANGSTERS

The "Blind Beggar Gang"—"The Bessarabians"—"The Odessians."

PEOPLE of the present generation who read with horror of the awesome crimes committed almost with impunity by the American gangster, who shudder at the thought of the awful deeds perpetrated by such "celebrities" as, for instance, Al Capone or the late lamented "Legs" Diamond, who say with pride that that sort of thing would never for one moment be tolerated in this country, would be surprised to learn perhaps that the gangs which used to exist in London at the time of which I write were equally as terrible as those which now overrun Chicago, New York, and other American cities.

I had close acquaintance with the gang problem and did my share in wiping it out, and many a rough handling have I received in connection with this duty.

My first experience of the sort was with the "Blind Beggar Gang." Why so named I never knew unless it was for the fact that members of this gang were sometimes arrested in the vicinity of a public-house of that name. Even to this day I often see what might be called remnants of this organisation of thirty and forty years ago.

Old men now and harmless, but what tales they could tell.

Usually about twenty strong, the members of the "Blind Beggar Gang" rarely worked in our district (which they called "Tom Tiddler's Ground"), but were more often to be found in public sale-rooms, at race meetings, underground railway stations, train and bus termini, and football grounds, the last-named being a veritable El Dorado to them. During the rush at the turnstiles they selected their victims at will, removing watches, chains, money, tie-pins, and any other small portable property that came to hand.

Woe betide the man or woman who accused them, for that was the signal for a *mêlée*, which was just to their liking, affording them added opportunities for their nefarious work and during which the accuser would be violently assaulted.

Smartly dressed, and working as they did outside the district where they lived and were known, they passed unsuspected and made big hauls. They were disciplined, too, and while at work religiously avoided drink (except when absolutely necessary); in fact, this rule was so strictly enforced that any member who departed from it was instantly dropped.

During their "leisure" hours they lived the lives of ordinary, comfortably well-off citizens, keeping good homes of which they were proud, and having wives and families whom they held in such regard that they usually kept them in complete ignorance as to the manner in which they earned their living.

With *nom de plumes* such as "Waxy," "Scarface" (Al Capone was not the first of that name, you see), "Lippy," "Slasher," "Flat Nose," "Doctor," etc., all these men had long and "famous" criminal records, which indeed they had to have before they were admitted to this particular gang. They stuck together, and in all my knowledge of them I only remember one instance of "squealing."

It was always quite hopeless to get any evidence from them, though whether this was due to "honour among thieves" or fear of reprisals I leave the reader to judge.

Mention of the "Doctor" reminds me that I met him recently in the East End, when we had quite a "crack" over old times, he pulling my leg mercilessly when reminding me of the way in which he and his friends had so many times cheated the police, and I getting one back on him by reminding him of an occasion when I caught him red-handed.

I vividly remember a scene which took place some years ago at the Tottenham Hotspur Football Ground when we had received orders to follow this gang. They were well at their work amongst the crowd, and it was an awful blow to their feelings when a pantechnicon dropped us like a bolt from the blue right in their very midst.

On this occasion we had found it necessary to wear

disguises, a thing we very rarely did, and this gave rise to a most ludicrous incident. It was a very wet day, and for the price of a drink I had borrowed an oilskin and a sou'wester from a local scavenger.

During the rush I was for a moment holding two of the gang, a thing they only permitted because they knew me; had I been a stranger I should without doubt have been violently assaulted. They were both smartly dressed, looking very much more like detectives than I did. Seeing this the scavenger rushed up and, forcing his way between us, said:

"What are you interfering with him for? 'E ain't done nothing—that's my overall 'e's wearing."

We arrested nine of them, but lost one before reaching the station. Known as the "old-un" and always wearing a silk hat he completely deceived the detective who held him and who let him go. This was unfortunate as he was in possession of most of the stolen property. The gang very much resented their arrest by officers from their own district, protesting that they had done nothing on our ground and that we had no right to follow them. They all received long sentences, the "old-un" included, for he was arrested at Epsom races a little later.

On another occasion I came into contact with this gang during a feud between them and a rival gang that had settled in the district. This is a state of affairs that never fails to have disastrous results. I was informed of the new gang's arrival and learned that they were in a public-house in a back street. I reached the place just in time to see three of the new-comers rush out smothered with blood and followed by a shower of glass.

There was nothing to do but look on and let them fight it out. They were injuring nobody but themselves and it really mattered little which side was exterminated, or even if both were. In any case to arrest any of them would have been sheer waste of time, since none of them would give evidence, "come copper" as they called it, much preferring to settle their differences in their own sweet way, a way which, I am bound to admit, was very effective.

The new gang was beaten and forced to leave the house, one of their number being in a very bad way indeed with a large picture frame hanging round his neck. This

apparently had been smashed over his head, in such a way that the glass was broken and was sticking into his face and neck.

Despite his injuries and almost helpless position his rivals continued to attack him, beating him with billiard cues and anything that came to hand. Both sides were terribly battered at the finish, but nobody made any complaints, even the proprietor of the "pub" declining to take action, saying they were all strangers to him and that he would never be able to identify any of them. He knew what was best for himself, and the compensation he received from the gang fully rewarded him for his silence.

The end of the "Blind Beggar Gang" came with the customary case of murder, and an appalling one it was, too. It appears that on one of their "off" days the gang had settled down in a public-house when a commercial traveller entered, and for some reason or other the gang resented his presence as an intrusion.

The traveller was told that if he didn't clear off they'd put his eyes out, but doubtless regarding the threat to be too ghastly to be really meant, the unfortunate man remained in the bar, with the dreadful result that the threat was immediately put into effect—at least as far as one eye was concerned, a member of the gang named Wallis forcing the end of his umbrella through the poor wretch's eye, rendering him—most mercifully—unconscious. Taken to London Hospital he remained in this state for four days, and then died.

At the inquest it was discovered that a piece of wood from the ferrule of the umbrella, measuring four and a half inches, had been driven into the eye with such force that it had embedded itself in the brain, and breaking off had remained there.

Wallis was arrested and stood his trial at the Old Bailey, but so well was he represented by counsel and witnesses that the jury returned a verdict in his favour. It will scarcely be believed when I tell you that at the conclusion of the case this brute was driven away from the court in triumph in a phaeton drawn by a pair of grey horses to his home in the East End.

It is some consolation to think that it was not long before he was again in trouble, making the mistake of committing a serious robbery in his own district, "Tom

Tiddler's Ground," and being captured was sent to a long term of imprisonment. He died some years later.

Gangs and rival gangs were continually cropping up in many districts, and not only were we troubled with our own particular thieves and blackmailers, but we were pestered with visits of gangs from other parts of London.

One of these, the "Strutton Ground Mob" as it was called, made an incursion into Middlesex Street—better known as Petticoat Lane—and Spitalfields one Sunday morning, and played havoc with the tradesmen who wouldn't submit to blackmail.

This was really a most unusual incident, for this neighbourhood was well known to be able to look after itself, and its own gangs resented anything in the nature of "poaching on its preserves." The sequel was amazing, for almost before the "visitors" had had time to get out of the district the East Enders got together and made their way to Westminster, the "home-town" of the Strutton Ground gentlemen.

As soon as I heard of it I left, in the company of other officers, for the battle-field, and arrived just in time to see a running fight. The Westminster terrors were trapped in their own lodging-houses, and many of them were battered into unconsciousness, though there were many bad casualties on both sides.

The police took a hand and a number of arrests were made, but with the usual result that, except where independent evidence could be obtained, no prosecutions were possible, the gangsters all refusing to "come copper."

There was yet another sequel to the affair. The leader of the Westminster "boys" challenged his opposite number, "Tom, the Irishman," to a fight with the "raw-uns," with personal prestige as the stake. And now I will let you into a secret. I do love a fight if it is a clean one, and having had news of the proposed meeting I made up my mind to be present. How I managed it is not material to my story, but I was there—and what a fight!

There was no referee or timekeeper, but two fine specimens of manhood, each standing five feet ten and weighing thirteen stone, stood toe to toe, and with their bare fists punched each other with all the strength at their

command. There was never a suggestion of a foul blow, and both being possessed of as much grit as a barrow load of sand, kept at it till the pair of them were fought to a standstill—hardly able to keep on their feet. Perhaps it was not strange that the two men shook hands and afterwards became firm friends.

One of the worst of all these organizations was the "stop at nothing" gang, a body of foreigners who specialised in a form of blackmail never before known in our district, or, for that matter, anywhere else in England.

I am neither a geographical nor ethnological expert, but my encyclopædia tells me that Bessarabia is a district with a population of between two and three million, composed of Russians, Poles, Roumanians, Greeks, Jews, Tartars, and a sprinkling of gypsies, and it was from this heterogeneous collection that the gang took its name of the "Bessarabians"—the "stop at nothing" gang.

They were the greatest menace ever known to London and the public little know how much they owe to the efforts of the Metropolitan Police that London is free to-day from a terror that made it—in the early days of this century—almost as dangerous a place to live in as Chicago is to-day.

In fact, there is every reason to believe that a good many members of the Bessarabian gang which we broke up in the East End thirty years ago are still to be found in the ranks of the gunmen plying their gentle trade in that American city.

Lists of people to be blackmailed were drawn up by the gangsters, and amongst these prospective brides provided the happiest and most productive results. A few days before the wedding ceremony a gangster would approach the bride's parents and threaten to expose all sorts of imaginary indiscretions of which their daughter had been guilty if their silence was not bought. The victims, fearful of the scandal that might ensue, invariably paid up.

Here is another example of the gangsters' methods.

There was an old Jewish couple living in a turning off the Whitechapel Road who were reputed to have saved a good deal of money. Their premises were burgled, but the thieves could find no trace of the alleged hoard. Accordingly one of the Bessarabians called a few days later and persuaded the old couple to pay a tribute for "protection."

I believe that in Chicago to-day the gangsters have learned the folly of "double-crossing." When they sell their "protection" they do at least stand by their bargain. The Bessarabians were not so particular. In this case the man who had sold his gang's protection advised the old couple not to leave any valuables in the shop or house.

The consequence was that a few days later, on the great day of "Yom Kippur"—known as the "Black Fast"—the old couple went to the local synagogue with all their worldly belongings—about £150 and a few pieces of jewellery—sewn in the woman's skirt.

Half-way through the service, someone threw some chemical stuff among the congregation.

A scene of wild confusion followed, and by the time the old man and woman reached the street the gang had made its haul—everything was gone. The poor old people robbed of their life savings were heartbroken, but they made no official complaint. They knew it was useless, and although I knew that the gang had robbed them it was utterly impossible to make an arrest.

This was only one of many cases that came to our notice. Small shopkeepers were forced to pay steady tribute. If they refused the sequel was certain. Their premises were marked, and sooner or later were the scene of a "rough house."

Why, you may ask, did not the victims of this brutal oppression complain to us? Sheer terrorism supplies the answer. Mutilation and worse was threatened to the "squealer," and it was well known that the threats would be duly carried out. As a result, evidence was impossible to obtain, even in the worst cases.

Lest you think I exaggerate let me give you a case in point, it is only one of many.

Early one morning I was making my way home along the Commercial Road when I heard police whistles and calls for help. Hurrying to the King's Hall, a large building used at that time for Jewish weddings and parties, I found the proprietor and his staff fighting desperately with about a dozen Bessarabians.

The proprietor's son had already been thrown down the lift shaft—fortunately not very deep—and was lying badly hurt and stunned at the bottom of it. When I arrived many of the gang recognised me and made off,

but the remainder attacked me in a body and I was compelled to use my truncheon, which I did with the utmost vigour, flooring three of them, and eventually, when assistance arrived, arresting three. But not one conviction did I get. Not a single person present dared to go into the witness-box and tell the truth, and the magistrate, refusing to accept uncorroborated police evidence, discharged all three.

Here is another instance that may bring home to the reader the desperate nature of the members of this organisation. They hired some premises in a back street and sub-let them to a foreigner for gambling purposes.

A few nights later, when everything was in full swing and about sixty people were present gambling, the gang entered and threatened to burn the place if the proprietor did not come to their terms. The answer not being to their satisfaction they proceeded to carry the threat into execution, and after smashing everything in the place, piled up the furniture and set light to it.

It must not be thought that the police were afraid, or negligent in their duty. We were piling up evidence that we knew would one day prove valuable, but for the time being we were helpless in the face of the problem I have stressed so much—the want of independent testimony.

I did not doubt that sooner or later we should break up the organisation; but now happened an incident which proved to be the beginning of the end of the "Bessarabians," though much blood was to flow before they received their final quietus. The incident to which I refer was the unexpected rebellion of one of the gang's potential victims.

This was a huge and absolutely fearless Jew named Weinstein, better known as "Kikal," and the proprietor of a restaurant called the "Odessa." He refused to pay tribute to the Bessarabians, and when a number of them attacked his shop he fought them single-handed, with an iron bar for a weapon.

"Kikal" won that epic battle, and five of the gang spent the next few weeks in hospital, but as usual neither victor nor vanquished would "come copper." What did happen, however, was that several bold spirits, inspired by Weinstein's "famous victory," formed a rival party

to the "Bessarabians," and in honour of the plucky Jew styled themselves the "Odessians." The immediate result of this competition was that the peaceful citizens of Whitechapel gained a respite, the rival gangs spending all their time fighting each other.

The leader of the new party threatened, with much delicacy, to cut off the ears of the Bessarabian leader if his gang got hold of that gentleman, and one night a man named Perkoff, who if not the leader was certainly a shining light of the older organisation, was lured by a woman into a back street, where he was immediately set upon by the "Odessians."

True to schedule one of his ears was literally slashed off with a razor, and he was only saved from being done to death by the timely arrival of some uniform officers. I reached the London hospital in time to see one of the surgeons endeavouring—unsuccessfully—to sew the ear on again.

In this instance, as in all others, the terribly injured man refused to "squeal." The incident, however, was an excuse—if excuse were needed—for reprisals.

One of the leaders of the "Odessians," known as "Tilly the burglar"—said to be a police informer and now believed to be a Chicago "cop"—was deputed to collect toll from coffee-stall keepers. One of these keepers, having been approached in the meantime by the opposite party, who sold him their "protection," refused payment, saying the "Odessians" would get no more money from him.

Nemesis followed with terrifying swiftness on the heels of this declaration, for late the same night a revolver shot announced the arrival of the gang, the terrified customers flying in all directions. Rushing forward the gangsters seized and overturned the stall, emptying the proprietor out into the road.

A rain of blows descended on his head and body. Whistles blew, and police arrived at the double just in time to save the life of the bruised and bleeding stall keeper.

It may be wondered why I was always so *au fait* with the actual details of these encounters, and the truth is that a series of extraordinary coincidences always found me near the scene of operations. In this case one of the

revolver bullets fired at the coffee urns actually broke a window within a few feet of me, and I was across the road at the stall even before the uniform officers.

Several of the gang were arrested and searched for firearms, but nothing came of it. The mere whisper of "Odessians" or "Bessarabians" was enough to put fear into the heart of the strongest man. "Tilly" fled the country, to be followed by others, who, if all I am told is true, were helped by him on their arrival in U.S.A. to join the police force. Such a thing in this country would, most fortunately, be impossible.

I now come to the incident which brought the war of the gangs to a climax and was finally the cause of ridding the country of these desperadoes, and which occurred at a "sing-song" in one of London's earliest houses of variety—the old "York Minster," a public-house in Philpot Street, Commercial Road.

The upper part of these premises accommodated some two or three hundred people, and on the night in question there was a big show of some so-called Russian dancers. The proprietor had been warned that the "Bessarabians" might interfere, and instead of coming to us for protection arranged with the "Odessians" to provide him with a guard.

All was going well when the "Bessarabians" arrived in force, and fighting their way into the Hall were soon engaged in furious battle with the rival gang. They were gradually driven back, and one of them, a man named Kaufmann, was surrounded by the "Odessians" and stabbed to death. He just managed to stagger out on to the pavement, where, his knife still in his hand, he fell dead.

Kid McCoy, a young foreign Jew, a boxer of some repute who had fought many good fights at the old Wonderland in Whitechapel, was mixed up in the affair, and arresting him together with another man we charged them with causing Kaufmann's death. McCoy protested his innocence of the actual stabbing, but when asked who was responsible declared his readiness to take any punishment except "topping" (hanging) before he would "squeal."

"If they are going to 'top' me," he said, "I will give you the name of the actual murderer; otherwise I will keep my mouth shut."

As it so happened the whole thing had been such a

desperate mix-up that clear evidence of murder against any one individual was impossible. McCoy was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude, and directly he was released went to America, where with the assistance of friends he was enabled to make a clean start. Cutting out all association with crooks McCoy made good, and is to-day, so I understand, a respectable citizen in a large way of business.

The immediate result of the Kaufmann murder was that people who had never dared to "talk" before began to come forward and let the police into the secrets of the two gangs. This was the thing we had long been waiting for, and without which we were practically powerless. So redoubling our efforts we managed to arrest several of the gangsters on various charges, and before long the "Bessarabians" and the "Odessians," realising they were marked men, came to the conclusion that London was too hot to hold them, and "packing up their tents stole silently away." Thus was the power of these terrible gangs broken and an evil menace removed from our midst.

The majority of the gangsters went to America, where, being young men, they soon joined forces with the local crooks. Many of them are leaders of Chicago gunmen to this day, whilst others have met the usual end of members of this delightful fraternity, and have been "bumped off," or "taken for a ride," by more successful rivals.

London, at all events, is well rid of them, and although sporadic efforts have been made from time to time to revive the gang menace, it never has attained and never will attain the proportions to which it grew in those old East End days of which I have written, for which the London public has every reason to say, in the words of the poet, "For this relief, much thanks."

CHAPTER XII

WHITE SLAVE TRAFFIC EVILS

White slave traffic—How girl victims were lured abroad—Victims for South America at £280 each—A Kennington affair—Arrest and fight with suspects—The evil stamped out—An amazing story of sorcery—Rachel—The floating eggs and the lighted candles—Secret hiding-places of the loot—Trial and sentence.

THROUGH a girl he had duped I was able to arrest one of the nastiest criminals in this country. He was engaged in the White Slave Traffic, the most ghoulish of all crimes. Whitechapel at that time was the lair of these traffickers, and I am glad to say I was able to help in lessening this evil. There was one curious coincidence about the case of which I am now writing. I had had occasion to take statements (about another matter) from girls at a Jewish school, and within a year one of these girls had become a White Slave victim, falling into the hands of a man who took her to Buenos Ayres, where she was sold for £250.

When she left this country no inkling of the girl's fate was suspected, either by the girl's parents or the police. A man, remarkably handsome and looking a gentleman, had come into the girl's life, with the result that both the parents and the girl herself were completely deceived. Before she was seventeen years of age she was induced by this man to accompany him to America, and went happily, believing all he told her about the wonderful life she would enjoy there.

Actually her life was terrible, but even so she was luckier than others. She was seen in America by a British commercial traveller who knew her parents in London and recognised her. This man sought the assistance of the local British Consul, with the happy result that the girl was rescued and put on a liner for home.

I took up the inquiry as soon as the girl arrived in London. What a scene there was at the station when she

appeared! The parents and other relations were mad with delight—their girl had returned to them from the dead.

My object was to get a statement from her with a view to tracking down the people who had been responsible for her tragic trip, and it took me a whole day to write down the statement that the girl eventually made. In all my experience I have never read anything more revolting than the story she had to tell. The man she went with was believed to be back in this country, and there being no difficulty in securing a warrant for his arrest, he was circulated next day as being “wanted.”

I don't think I ever put more zeal into a case than I did in this one, for the girl's sufferings had set me going. After the search had proceeded unsuccessfully for a few days I called again at the girl's home, there to find the parents absolutely distracted, for, to my utter surprise, the girl had disappeared again. This would probably have resulted in the whole case falling through had I not been so personally keen. I couldn't resist the feeling that in some way or other the man had managed to get in touch with the girl and had once more cast his spell over her.

Night after night I spent in the West End of London, haunting Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square, where the “butterflies” are to be found, hoping that by some chance I might drop on the man or the woman. I was rewarded at last. One night when keeping my vigil I spotted a man who answered to the description, and although I couldn't be certain of his identity, the likeness was close enough for me to decide to follow him. He boarded a bus going east, which suited me very well, because I preferred to make the arrest in my own division; also he had the reputation of being a nasty customer when cornered.

When the bus reached the Mile End Road I was just wondering how I could get my man off it without too much fuss, when he saved me the trouble by getting off himself. I followed and grabbed him. He was annoyed, and, while he ridiculed the idea of arrest, he made no denial of the charge.

“I own she gets her living in that way,” he said, “but she loves me and will never come to court.”

We started for the station, but had not got very far when the man started to show fight, and before I had

subdued him we were both minus our hats, while one of the sleeves of his jacket was missing. He was also bleeding from the nose, and I make no secret of the fact that I was quite glad of the opportunity of giving him something to go on with.

The girl now had to be found, for there was no evidence to go on without her. Her parents had no idea where she was, but expressed the fear that she had returned to live with the man, so accordingly we asked for a remand and concentrated on finding her. The hunt went on for the whole of that day without the vestige of a clue, when in the evening I accidentally came upon her in a street not far from her home. She had become anxious about the man, and had ventured from the house where they had been living together to try and get news of him. So far from being pleased with the news I had for her she stoutly refused to give evidence against him, but her attendance in court was secured by a magistrate's order.

I had the surprise of my life when the girl went into the witness-box, for the solicitor for the accused immediately rose and lodged an objection to any statement being taken from her, on the grounds that a wife cannot be asked to give evidence against her husband.

This was indeed a bombshell as I had no idea there had been any question of marriage between them, for the girl had made no reference to it in the long statement I had originally taken from her. Questioning her the magistrate satisfied himself that she really was the wife of the man in the dock, and it looked as if the whole case was going to fall through.

But the magistrate, a very astute man, and one of London's greatest lawyers, had other ideas on the subject.

"A very great deal of trouble might have been saved the police in this case," he said, "but if I remember rightly there was something in the evidence of the officer who effected the arrest which seems very germane to the matter. Let him come forward and repeat what the prisoner said when he was arrested."

Accordingly I went into the witness-box, and repeated the accused's:

"I own she gets her living that way. . . ."

"What do you know about him?" the magistrate then asked. And on the strength of the information I was able

to supply the man went to Sessions as a rogue and vagabond, where he received the maximum sentence and was recommended for deportation.

He had been clever, and had married the girl in order to save himself from the consequences of his crime. I learned afterwards, incidentally, that she was not the first girl he had married. Fortunately for the safety of the East End girls, the law, though unable to punish him for this particular offence, was long enough to reach him for another.

Anonymous letters are sometimes of tremendous value to the police, and I remember one I received many years ago alleging that three young women had been stolen and were being taken to South America. The writing appeared to be that of a woman, but there was nothing to indicate where the letter came from. I decided to make a few inquiries, and then if nothing came of it to drop the matter; we were far too busy to waste much time on anonymous letters.

I got into touch with one or two people suspected of having a hand in this sort of thing, and picked up a piece of information which I thought might lead to something; this was that a certain disappointed young Jewess had been seeking assistance by writing letters to the police.

I had some difficulty in tracing the girl, but found her eventually living in a turning off the Whitechapel Road. My arrival at the house caused some little excitement, for two men left hurriedly, but not before I had time to have a good look at them. My knowledge of Yiddish came in very useful in my conversation with the girl (I had to gain her confidence before she would "open up") and she told me a long and strange story which I will endeavour to summarise.

She had been engaged, she said, to a man who had promised to marry her and take her on a trip to America. She was to have the best trousseau that money could buy, and a beautiful home on the other side of the Atlantic.

A quiet wedding had been arranged, and this had actually taken place. A few days after the marriage the girl had been dropped for a more attractive rival, who was expected to leave with her husband for America in a few days. "Hell knows no fury . . ."—you know the

rest—and the result was the anonymous letter to the police.

I set out to confirm the girl's story. I was not long in finding the house in which she had been living, and where she had been shown the wonderful trousseau, which by a subterfuge I was able to see for myself. It was certainly not to be wondered at that the girl was crying her eyes out with disappointment, for there was wearing apparel there of every conceivable kind and of the best quality.

The inquiry getting interesting, I now sought assistance, and after a lot of hard work we established the identity of the suspects and reached the stage when it was necessary to apply for warrants. In order to obtain these we had, of course, to appear in court with our witnesses. When the time came the girl had flown. Worse than that, she had actually disappeared in company with the two men we had been hoping to arrest. Two other young women, we heard, were with the party.

My girl informant had evidently repented at the last moment, confessed to the men all she had done, and travelled with them despite the fact that two younger and more attractive victims now held pride of place.

We dashed off first to Waterloo, where we found a lot of women's clothes, but no trace of the party, and inquiries made at Southampton satisfied us that they had not sailed from that port. Then came information which led us to believe that they had all sailed on a liner from Liverpool bound for Buenos Ayres.

There was no wireless in those days, and as the ship was well out of British waters by now, there seemed nothing to do but apply for extradition warrants, which meant going to the Home Office. The warrants were obtained and arrangements made for my departure for Buenos Ayres; but the trip did not come off, the shipping company setting the cables buzzing and arranging for the quintette to be transferred to another ship at Rio.

Some fourteen days later I met the boat at Liverpool and helped to escort the little party back to London. We found documents on the men showing that on their arrival at Buenos Ayres they were to receive the sum of £280 for each of the three women.

The proceedings were long and complicated. There is nothing more difficult in the world than to get a con-

viction in this sort of case, the misguided women, believing that they have been bound for a wonderful life, putting every obstacle in our way. In addition more sinister forces were at work behind the scenes. We couldn't identify the people responsible, but there was plenty of evidence that our witnesses were being "got at." We strongly suspected that the big guns of the traffic were at work, afraid no doubt that they themselves might get roped in.

In the end it was found necessary to take a house for the use of the witnesses in Mile End, and to place over it a guard of police officers. Eventually, however, the case came up for trial, the prisoners being convicted and sent to long terms of imprisonment.

This case, bringing as it did praise from the Bench, led to others, and at the very next sessions we were able to bring a string of five of this nasty tribe to justice.

All of these were young foreigners, and the charge preferred against them concerned two young country girls whom they had encountered in Kennington Park. Unaware of the risks they were running the girls had been induced by two of the prisoners to go for a walk. The stroll led them to a street off the Whitechapel Road, where one of the men rented a small room. Here the girls were assaulted, but one of them managed to get away. Some time elapsed before the case was brought to the notice of the police. Consequently, when late one night I took up the inquiry and made my way to the address given, I found the back room empty and the birds flown.

Early next morning, however, the crowd was rounded up in a house in Splint Street into which I effected entrance by climbing a wall at the back and slipping in at the back door; I then opened the front door and admitted my mates.

All was quiet—ominously so, but the first room we reached uncovered a real hornets' nest, as in it there were no less than fourteen men.

A desperate fight followed, but we were equal to the occasion and not a single man escaped. I rather enjoyed the experience though I was pretty badly marked before it was all over. The five men charged in connection with the Kennington Park affair were sent to long terms of imprisonment, the Judge taking the opportunity of warning all young girls against speaking to strange men—especially foreigners.

Session after session which followed saw one or more of these scoundrels up for trial, and eventually this menace to young women of the East End was entirely removed.

It was not always serious crime that we had to contend with in the East End, and in contrast to the vile type of offence dealt with in the first part of this chapter I propose now to tell some stories of another sort of crime, which though it had its serious side, as indeed all crime must have, was at the same time invariably productive of something humorous, and since it often provided us with relaxation and amusement I am hopeful that it may be the same for the reader. The offence to which I now refer was that of sorcery or witchcraft.

Passing through one of the back streets of Whitechapel on one occasion my attention was drawn to the wailing and lamenting of a group of foreign women standing round a doorway. Interested, I at once stopped, and pushing my way through the crowd that had gathered I learned that a woman was making an accusation against the occupier of the house.

Unable to get anything definite from the women congregated round the door, I entered the house and went to one of the rooms.

In the course of his career a police officer necessarily sees some strange and remarkable sights, and here in this room I came face to face with what was certainly the strangest and most remarkable sight that *I* had ever seen.

Standing on the table in this filthy room stood a woman who, except for a pair of garters, was absolutely nude. Her arms were crossed and tied at the elbows, and certain parts of her body had been smeared with some sticky substance to which swarms of flies adhered. In each hand she held a lighted candle, while on the table all round her were hundreds of tin-tacks and drawing-pins, points upward, and placed in such a manner that it was impossible for the woman to move without treading on them with her bare feet. She was utterly spent and exhausted, yet it was much against her will that she was released.

I am quite aware that this sounds very much like a nightmare, but it was, nevertheless, perfectly true.

The sequel was more incredible still.

The woman accused as being responsible for all this appears to have had such extraordinary powers of fascination over other women living in the neighbourhood that she bewitched them, or otherwise reduced them to such helplessness that she was able to fleece them of everything of any value they possessed either in money or kind.

This woman at the time of my visit was remonstrating with her victim for not carrying out certain instructions, and the table scene I have just described was in the nature of a penance.

The poor dupe in this case had arrived in this country some months earlier from Lodz, where she had left her husband, who owing to immigration regulations had not been able to accompany her. The witch (if I may use the term), whose name, by the way, was Rachel, claimed to be able to restore relations to each other no matter what distance separated them, and the poor dupe hearing of these remarkable gifts hurried to enlist Rachel's aid in restoring her husband to her side.

The method by which Rachel convinced her dupes that she could restore their relations to them was carried out with the assistance of candles and eggs, the number of both being fixed in ratio to the number of days travelling that would be involved in effecting the restoration. In the case of Lodz, in which town the woman's husband was still supposed to be living, it would take fourteen days travel for the man to rejoin his wife in England, and accordingly the dupe was required to supply fourteen candles and a similar number of eggs, plus, I need hardly add, the fee demanded by the miracle worker for her services.

This having been done, the articles received a form of blessing from Rachel, who then placed the eggs in a bowl of water under her own bed.

The candles were returned by her to the victim, who had to keep one of them burning continuously all night by her bedside. Should a candle fail to burn right through to a finish the spell was broken, with consequences to which I will refer in a moment.

Each morning the poor dupe had to call at Rachel's house to give an assurance that the previous night's candle had duly burned itself out, and on her being satisfied on

this point the sorceress would produce the bowl of eggs and by her powers of enchantment cause one to float on the water. This meant that the relation (in this case, the husband) had completed one more day of his journey.

All went well and as the days went by the victim grew more excited at the prospect of the restoration of her relation, till one day Rachel would declare that owing to her client's want of faith and neglect in carrying out instructions the whole thing had gone wrong and had no further chance of success.

The trouble was always caused when one of the candles, usually about half-way through the procedure, unaccountably failed to burn out to a finish. Up to that point everything had gone splendidly, the eggs, according to Rachel, always coming to the surface with the burning of the candle, but when the latter failed the egg followed suit, with the result that the relation's journey was broken, and wherever he happened to be at the moment there he had to stop.

That anybody in this world could not only believe this amazing hocus-pocus, but was prepared to pay for it as well, seems almost unbelievable, but Rachel was not only the most plausible liar I have ever met, but was in addition so undoubtedly fascinating that she nearly got even me to believe that she was possessed of supernatural powers.

But while listening to her I began to suspect those eggs and candles, and examining one of the latter very carefully I found that it had been broken and rejoined. Breaking it again at the place where it had been mended, I discovered the reason why it failed to burn through. About two inches of wick had been removed and a twisted hairpin substituted, which, while it kept the candle rigid, of course extinguished the light.

Turning my attention to the eggs I placed them in a fresh bowl of water and sure enough one bobbed up to the surface and stayed there. A moment's inspection showed the egg to be empty, its contents having been removed by the ordinary process of egg-sucking, after which hot wax had been dropped on the hole and then smoothed over until it was hardly discernible.

When it became known that the police were in Rachel's house I was besieged by dozens of alien women, all of

whom had been victimised by Rachel, but who through fear of her had never complained. Once they knew she was exposed they became absolutely virulent, one of them rushing into the house threatening to kill the witch. One can hardly blame her, for in her case her husband had been brought all the way from Poland by Rachel's spells, and having got as far as Southampton was left there because at the penultimate moment the candle had gone out.

As a matter of fact this woman was as untruthful as Rachel, for it transpired that she had not been burning the candles at all and deceived Rachel until the very last day. Each day the egg had floated to the top of the water in approved style, but the news that the last candle had burned out was too much for Rachel (who knew it couldn't have done), so she threw the remaining egg in the woman's face and told her her husband would starve. This was the woman who, thinking that her deception had been discovered, did "the table act," and who had, in addition to the fees, paid several sums which she believed were to be used for the naturalisation of her husband on his arrival in England!

Rachel may have been illiterate, but cunning she certainly was. Her craft and character had such amazing influence over her clients that they even parted with their last bit of underclothing in lieu of fees. Every room in the charlatan's house was stored full with clothing, furniture, and other articles that she had taken in payment. Searching the place I found small articles of jewellery in the most inconceivable places—in the well of the oil-lamp, in the knobs of the bed-posts, in a rubber bag lowered into the lavatory cistern; even in the curtain poles, which were hollow.

Rachel was a Russian and, according to several of her neighbours who came from the same district, she was well known in her home village as a fortune-teller, and had been responsible for many women coming to England, where, she told each of them, a husband would be awaiting her.

During my search I found the neatest thing in fake playing cards that I have ever seen. Made of celluloid-like material, and covered with grotesque Russian characters, they could be held so that one was reflected in the

other and by a pressure or a relaxing of the fingers down the sides any card could be released at the will of the shuffler, the sides having been finely cut or sand-papered, leaving ridges that could be manipulated with ease.

Rachel stood her trial at Clerkenwell Sessions and was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment to be followed by deportation, the judge remarking that by this means she might be able to find her own husband.

Two men called to give evidence on her behalf were identified by witnesses as missing husbands who turned up for one night and disappeared the next day. They had the impudence to admit this, saying they had only been paid to sleep with the women one night, and such things being common in their own country they could not see that there was anything wrong in it.

CHAPTER XIII

COUNTERFEITING

Counterfeit coiners—Possessing and uttering—My first case—Arrest and fight in public-house—The superstitious barmaid and the five-shilling piece—Double-crossing the "Yard" men—A raid and an arrest—Coiners' impedimenta.

UNLESS you are so fortunate as to be free from coiners in your district it must from time to time come to your knowledge that bad coin is being circulated, and although complaints rarely reach the police station its existence will be brought to your notice in the ordinary course of your daily inquiry.

It was usually the small shopkeeper whom I found to be the sufferer, and many amusing explanations I heard as to how the "dud" coin had been passed on him and how he—in some cases—had passed it on to someone else. More often than not, however, it would be nailed to the shop counter as a warning to others, but I don't think this ever had the effect of frightening the coiner or, as he was known to the initiated, the "smasher."

I know of one small general shop in Stepney where there are over a hundred counterfeit florins and half-crowns nailed to the counter.

It may be of interest to many to know that according to the Coinage Act it is an offence to be in possession of three or more pieces of gold or silver counterfeit coin. There must, however, be proof that it is held knowingly, with intent to utter the same. The "smasher," who is the actual utterer, knows, of course, this section of the Act, and seldom has more than one bad coin in his possession, and a second person—often a woman—is invariably employed to carry the bulk and feed the "smasher" with it as required.

One of the very few instances of a criminal suspect being liable to search before being charged is provided

for in the Coinage Act, the object being, of course, to see if they have more than the actual coin tendered in their possession. A constable on being called to a person attempting to utter counterfeit coin may search him on sight.

I remember as a very young "bobby" being called to a public-house in Whitechapel Road where two men had been detained by the landlord for tendering a bad two-shilling piece in payment for two drinks, but he couldn't satisfy me as to which man had actually handed him the coin. Inexperienced though I was I fortunately knew my powers under the Act, and as the landlord persisted in the charge I told the men I was going to search them.

The landlord, who appeared to be quite a useful-looking fellow, volunteered to hold one whilst I searched the other, but meeting more than his match all four of us were soon on the floor, I attempting to search my man whilst a terrible fight was going on between the other two.

It is a well-known fact that whilst a criminal will often give in to a policeman, a civilian who can take him into custody and detain him must first prove himself to be the better man. However, with assistance and after considerable damage had been done to the bar furniture, the two men were eventually taken to the station and charged.

Committed for trial on a charge of tendering and uttering a counterfeit coin they were both acquitted on the grounds that "they did not pass off the same well knowing it to be counterfeit." Although these men had been previously convicted for a similar offence they actually brought an action for false imprisonment and were awarded £80 damages, which the landlord had to pay.

Among the many coining cases in which I was engaged were several concerning the making of five-shilling, or crown-pieces, now no longer minted. They were of the year 1906, and so perfectly did they resemble the genuine article that even the Mint authorities had considerable difficulty in deciding that they were spurious.

The circumstances under which one of these coins was first brought to my notice were rather peculiar. A barmaid

had taken a five-shilling piece to a local jeweller to be made into a brooch, and while endeavouring to solder the pin fastening he found he could not make the two metals fuse. It was just at this moment that I happened to enter the shop, and finding the jeweller in a state of excitement I inquired as to the cause. With no more suspicion of counterfeit than I had he handed me coin and pin, and examining them closely I found that the heat of the blow-pipe had created quite a different effect on the crown piece to that made on the pin.

At first I thought that the pin was not pure silver, then perhaps that the coin might be bad, when a sudden idea occurring to me I asked the man to try the pin on another coin. I handed him half a crown from my pocket, and to this without any difficulty he soldered the pin. Satisfied now that the coin was counterfeit, I asked the jeweller, without disclosing my opinion, not to make any further attempt on it until I could again be present.

In conversation the man had dropped the name of the hotel where his barmaid customer was employed, and as the proprietor—a German—had been useful to me on other occasions I went straight there, thinking perhaps that he might be able to assist me now. I knew that both barmaids and barmen were extremely superstitious about five-shilling pieces and were very reluctant to take one over the counter, but the story I heard at the German's house seemed incredible, for here I was told by employees that to accept this coin in payment of drinks brought fear of instant dismissal.

It was some time before I was successful in making the landlord understand what I wanted, but eventually, and without making my object known, I was enabled to see the barmaid concerned. Most anxious to make the acquaintance of the maker of the coin, my first question to the girl was to ask where she got it. I was met at first with an emphatic denial of all knowledge of it, but afterwards timidly telling me how much all barmaids dreaded the coin, she told me that a man, whom she believed to be a German, tendered it to her in payment for a drink, at the same time apologising for having no smaller change.

Whilst not daring to refuse to take it, the thought that she might lose her job if she did so worried her that, getting permission to leave the bar for a moment, she

got five shillings of her own from her room and changed them for the crown-piece, which she kept herself. Still superstitious, however, she feared some harm might come to her if she attempted to spend it, and accordingly she decided to have it made into a brooch for her mother.

It so happened that the man had been in the house just before my visit, and the girl had told him of the intention regarding the coin. He appeared very interested and was anxious to know where she had taken it, for if he could get another he said he would like to have it made into a medallion for his chain. The girl, of course, gave him the address.

Returning to the jeweller I found him very pleased with himself, for a man had called and asked to see the brooch, but as it was not finished he was calling again. The jeweller made the reason of his extreme gratification manifest by telling me that the man had offered him ten shillings each for two similar brooches, provided he could get the coins, and that by an extraordinary coincidence another man had come in with three almost the moment after the first had gone out.

I asked to be allowed to see the three coins and compare them with the first one, only to find that they were as like as peas in a pod, not only the date, 1906, but the milling being identical. All four pieces had been made from the same mould.

"What did you give for them?" I asked.

"Well," said the jeweller, "he wanted six bob apiece for them, but I got the three for sixteen and six, so I shall show a profit and still have one in hand."

I have described the man as a jeweller, but I'm afraid he had never dealt with anything very valuable in his little shop. Through his inexperience he was not only dealing with counterfeiters but was being made the victim of a simple though impudent confidence trick. Whatever may have been his intentions when going to the jeweller's the first man was not long in taking advantage of the state of things he discovered when he got there, and for the purpose of misleading the jeweller played a very old trick on him.

Without any intention of returning to the shop he made what appeared to be a very good offer, i.e. ten shillings

for a five-shilling article; and guessing that in consequence the jeweller would be eager to secure any five-shilling pieces that might come his way, simply sent a confederate along with three, which the man immediately bought and would still have had in his possession but for my arrival.

The thing that the two men had done was a thing very rarely risked by counterfeiters, for it was apt to attract attention, and this might easily have led to their identity being established. The "smasher," seldom behaving in a way likely to cause any comment, invariably gets away without suspicion.

Their conduct on this occasion admirably suited my purpose, and, though I doubted very much if the men would return again, I set the trap.

My first trouble was the jeweller, a nervy and excitable individual, who, on the mere mention of the possibility of police proceedings, wanted to give up the coins and take no further part in the matter. Fortunately I had only told him it was a case of fraud; had I mentioned counterfeiting I verily believe the poor wretch would have had a fit.

I told him that later on I would be glad to take the five-shilling pieces from him, but for the present I wished him to keep them and on no account sell or dispose of them, and further, if either of the men called again he was to bargain with them for all the coins they could get. He was not to pay for them, however, but was to try and arrange for the men to bring them after business hours, when a friend would be waiting with the money.

It looked to me as if more than two men were concerned, and, to make a really successful job of it, I wanted to bag the lot, together with more than just a few samples of the counterfeit coins.

By arrangement with the occupier of a house from where there was a good view of the shop, observation was kept, but it was not until the end of a wearisome week that anything happened. Believing the thing to be hopeless, I crossed to the shop one night just as the jeweller was about to close, when he told me that a man had called who said he had been sent by his friend to know

if the jeweller could do with a few more five-shilling pieces.

As so often happens, my unsuspecting assistant had bungled things. Because it was not one of the men he had seen previously he thought it didn't matter, but he had told the man he could bring them along if he liked, but within half an hour as otherwise he would be out. However, he was able to give me a good description of the man, so back I went to my hiding-place to inform my mates, who like myself were getting rather fed up. We had scarcely settled down when two likely looking traders appeared at the corner of the street.

From the descriptions we had it was evidently the last arrival and the man who had first deceived the barmaid. Their arrival stimulated us, and I wondered if they had got the goods with them; it is so easy to make a mistake and arrest the wrong man, for without the actual "guide" we had only circumstantial evidence.

After a brief conversation the men separated, one coming in the direction of the jewellers, and the other moving slowly off the other way. The latter was not allowed to get far before my second in command was well on his heels with full instructions what to do. It was the last one to call on the jeweller that now engaged my attention. He had stopped at the shop door wondering, apparently, how he was to get in since the shop was closed, though a light showed over the side entrance.

However, he knocked, and, the door opening, the gas light exposed him fully to our view, but no signal came from the jeweller, who appeared to be in doubt, and who, instead of inviting the man in, stood gossiping to him at the door in a strangely indifferent manner.

So I had to take a chance as it wasn't likely to come again, and I was quickly across the road.

The suspect was a strongly built man, and if he had the goods there was every likelihood of a physical struggle for the possession of them, but there was no other way now, for he had seen me and suspected me, and, for all I knew, recognised me, for these men made it their business to know police officers when they saw them.

His right hand was in his coat pocket, and thinking it might hold the package I was seeking, I seized him by the arm. He immediately released his hand, and before

I knew where I was had put a waist-hold on me that rendered me momentarily helpless, but fortunately I knew the counter move. For a second I was lifted into the air, and despite the counter I had put up we fell headlong into the passage, nearly knocking the terrified jeweller off his feet.

Jumping up I was followed by my opponent, who, facing me, reached out two of the largest fists I had ever seen; but now attack came from a least expected quarter, the dealer who had only been an onlooker up to this point seizing me from behind and shouting excitedly in his broken accent:

"Dat is not him! Dat is not him! You 'ave got a mistake—vot a fool you make of yourself."

Slowly I stepped back and straightened myself up, wondering what idiotic thing I had done now and what the consequences might be. Not a word came from the man with whom I had been at grips, and as he stood there putting his clothing in order I puzzled my brain to think what apology I could make.

"Why didn't you tell me before this happened?" I said to the jeweller. "You are to blame for not keeping to the arrangements. Anyhow," I added, "tell me who he is and what he's doing here."

"It's all right, Mr. Leeson," said the man, staring me in the face, "I know you've made a mistake."

And now, for some reason that I cannot put into words, I knew that I had *not* made a mistake. I was on the point of asking the man how he knew my name when a surreptitious movement of his foot caught my eye. He was cunningly attempting to push a parcel into the doorway of the room behind him with his foot. It was something I was not prepared for. He was endeavouring to dispose of the very thing I was seeking, and had he succeeded in getting the parcel into the room it would have required much more evidence than I had at my disposal to satisfy the Court that he brought it there.

Without a moment's hesitation I jumped for his legs, and in an instant he was lifted off his feet and the precious parcel was safe in my coat pocket. The man had taken advantage of the situation, however, and nearly got away. He fought wildly for his liberty, but certain now that the parcel contained counterfeit I had no intention of letting

him slip through my fingers. I retreated a yard or so, and then met his attack with a straight left to the jaw, followed by a right, and with such force that he collapsed and fell, dragging me with him.

I got to my feet as a shout came from the jeweller, who had looked on without making any attempt to interfere.

"You're a murderer—you're a murderer," he yelled. "Vot for you hit the man like this?—he didn't hit you."

As the fight had been anything but a one-sided affair—my nose was bleeding and I had been badly kicked on the legs—his remarks didn't help to improve matters.

There is no saying how the affair might have ended, but for the timely arrival of a uniform officer, with whose assistance I got the man to the station.

On arriving there I found my "second in command" with the other man, whom he was detaining pending further developments. His appearance tallied with the description given by the barmaid of the man who first tendered the coin at the hotel, and I confess to being sorely disappointed when neither the girl nor the jeweller succeeded in picking him out in the identification parade.

The parcel contained many more five-shilling pieces—I have forgotten the exact number—made from the same mould. They had a perfect finish, and I nearly lost some of them at the Old Bailey when inquisitive people asked to see them.

In addition to a long term of imprisonment the prisoner, who said his name was Parkosky, was recommended for deportation to Russia, but during the War, having occasion to go to one of our munition factories in the course of my "intelligence" work, I saw Parkosky acting as gauge examiner!

Included in my many counterfeit coin cases I think the following is another worth recording.

Some Scotland Yard officers especially employed on coining cases were in our district, and whilst they were perfectly entitled to make inquiries there I considered that I ought to have a little more knowledge of what they were doing.

Treading on their heels through a few back turnings it was not long before I knew the address they were interested

in, and therefore decided to make a few inquiries on my own account.

The following morning, long before even the cleaners were at work at the Great "Yard," I sat disguised on the very doorstep where they had been keeping observation. It was a dark, bitter morning, and the few people who occupied the house were all out and about. I had seen them all, but not the slightest notice had been taken of me as I sat there apparently asleep, for it was no rarity in this district to see people sleeping in the street. I cannot describe to you my feelings on this and many similar occasions, but I can tell you that more moss is gathered by the proverbial stone than you would bargain for. Coiners don't live in the cleanest of houses.

The last man to leave the house seemed the most likely individual for my plan, and I followed him to a coffee-house in the Commercial Road, which he entered without the slightest suspicion of having been shadowed. I remained on the watch at a convenient distance hoping he would come out again before daylight gave my disguise away.

I was on the point of giving up my vigil when I was rewarded with the reappearance of my man accompanied by another. The latter had evidently slept at the coffee-house, as he was still completing his toilet when he emerged—putting on his collar and tie. He had experienced some of the "ups and downs" of life, for one of his legs was shorter than the other, a fact which would make him easier for observation and identification.

Apparently in a hurry, the two men turned in the direction of the City, with me hot on their heels. Reaching Aldgate Station they hesitated, but were not long in making up their minds, and entered a tram for Liverpool Street. Here it was necessary to keep as close to them as possible, for at that hour people were swarming into the City, and it would have been an easy matter for my quarry to shake me off.

The first man made straight for the booking office, and I was sufficiently near him to hear him book single to Chelmsford. I kept on the track of the other, who returned to the coffee shop in Commercial Road, where I thought he might "keep" for a while till I found out a little more about him and his friend.

So off I went home, and after some refreshment and a change into decent clothes I reported at the office, and then started out again to see if I could get a little inside information about the house where I picked up my first suspect. Arriving there I found the door open, and was met in the passage by an iron-faced woman, who without any waste of time blurted out:

"I s'pose yore another one bin sent about the mad dawg and the man with the clump foot! A nice 'put' this is—my old man ort to a' bin 'ere, e'd a' clumped their —— 'eads!"

"What's the trouble," I asked.

"Oh, two fellers come up 'ere about 'arf hour ago, and said as 'ow they'd bin sent from the Town 'All about a mad dawg wot belonged to a man wiv a clump foot."

My friends from the "Yard," thought I. It behoved me to act cautiously, for since I had already established the identity of the man "wiv the clump foot," I wanted to know more about him. However, the visit of the Yard men afforded a most useful subterfuge, and I worked it for all it was worth.

"Let me come in," I said. "I should like to know more about these men."

"All right," she answered, "come in. I can tell yore a 'split' (detective)."

On the way to her room I let her talk without interruption, and learned that the only man living there was a traveller, who left home early and returned late; also that he was very good to her and brought little things for her children because her husband had deserted her. Having reached the room I immediately noticed a number of small parcels bearing addresses in country towns.

There was soap, salt, blacking, pea flour, and sweets, even a packet of bird-seed, the contents of each being about the average value of fourpence. These small parcels told me their own tale, for I knew from experience that they were purchases made by the "smasher" when uttering bad two shillings or half-crowns. Disposing of the coins in this manner, and in remote country districts, reduces risk to a minimum, whilst the "change" from the various purchases shows a fair margin of profit.

I made a quick mental note of the places of purchase, for they might be very useful for future reference, but I was certain, from the careless way in which the woman let me look round the rooms, that the counterfeiter's "plant" was not there, and it was up to me to find it.

The woman had talked so much that she had completely forgotten the supposed reason for my being there, and before I left actually gave me permission to call again if I wanted to. She was no fool, however, and I had to allow for the possibility that she was pitting her brains against mine, in which case I could console myself with the fact that I had not disclosed anything.

"I'm glad I didn't meet that mad dog," I said, as I was going out.

"Yes," she answered, "and the man wiv the clump foot, too, only 'e ain't got no clump foot, and they won't find 'im 'ere. I know 'oo they mean."

Of course she knew, I thought, and fortunately so did I, for it must be the man I had followed to Liverpool Street.

Back at the police station I found two of my colleagues waiting for me. This meant a saving of time, and we quickly fixed up our plan of campaign.

The following morning I took up my position near the coffee-house, and at about seven o'clock saw my "traveller" coming from the same direction as the previous day. Shadowing him closely was one of my chums, to whom I had delegated this duty in case they were watching for me at the lodging-house.

He entered the café, and after remaining there for over an hour left with the other man by the side entrance. Thinking that perhaps both men lived there and that the shop entrance was only used as a "blind," we were fortunately watching the side door, too; otherwise we might have been waiting there now.

Off they went to Liverpool Street again, and this time they both entered the train, having booked tickets for Colchester. They were following out the common practice of those days—and probably these days, too—which was for one to carry, and the other to "smash" or utter. Whether they were actually going to Colchester was doubtful, as they might get out anywhere, but in any case police regulations prevented us following them.

A few discreet inquiries about the coffee-house and its occupants satisfied us that these men were not ordinary customers, but, as we surmised, lived on the premises. This meant observation during the night to see who went in or out, and, which was more important still, if there were any unusual lights which might perhaps indicate the counterfeiter's workroom. These men invariably work at night, and it was necessary to catch them at it if we were to have full measure of success.

Shortly after midnight our "hoppy" suspect arrived alone and entered by the side door, in a window above which a light appeared less than a minute later. The next arrival appeared a moment later; a tall, powerfully built individual of the pugilistic type, who, as my mate remarked, was just the sort to give a lot of trouble.

However, it was just as well to know beforehand what we were likely to have to contend with.

No. 2 knocked gently at the side door, and the light above being immediately extinguished, the window was quickly raised and a head looked out. Satisfied apparently that everything was O.K., a string to which a key was attached was lowered, the big man opened the door and went in. All this, of course, provided useful information in the event of our having to raid the house.

The light—a very poor one, by the way—now reappeared, and it was possible to see the shadows moving about the room, though too high up to be of any use to us. Anyway, we settled down for the night, our observation proving that the men in the upstairs room did not go to sleep, but spent the night engaged in some nefarious work or other, the details of which it was not very difficult now to guess.

Satisfied that a visit would be worth while we decided to make it at night, since it is of much greater importance to arrest the actual maker and seize the "plant" than merely to get the "smasher" or the holders of the coins.

The following night being Saturday, the coiner's "night off," we fixed on Sunday for our visit, hoping to find them in the midst of their preparations for Monday's trade, and taking up our positions of observation waited till about 2 a.m. We knew, of course, that to knock would

be fatal, as after one peep from the window, everything—moulds, metals, and tools—would be destroyed.

So for the purpose of entry we provided ourselves with a large bunch of keys, but any hopes we might have had of getting in that way very quickly faded, our first attempt showing that the door was securely fastened on the inside. We were not to be put off, however, and a wall at the side of an adjoining house which I had previously noted as a possible means of retreat for the coiners now presented itself to my mind as just as likely a means to effect an entrance.

A look round to see that all was clear, and a lift up from my mates, I was over—right over and smack into a water butt on the other side. Fortunately the neighbourhood was not aroused, and soaked to the skin I climbed the next wall and found myself at the back door of the coffee-house. Except for a latch the door had no fastening, and closing it gently behind me as I entered I groped my way to the street door, removed the bolts and let my pals in, carefully fastening the door behind me.

Not a sound could be heard as on hands and knees I led the way to the top floor. The coiners were busy evidently, for from beneath the well-worn door we could see a light and the shadows of a flickering fire. Taking a chance to see if the door was locked I turned the handle gently and, as I thought, noiselessly. Instantly all sound from inside ceased. Although I hadn't opened the door they had heard the movement.

"Who's there?" called a voice after a pause.

Again silence and then an argument from the men: "There's no one there!" "There is!" "Well, you go and see."

From the different voices we now knew there were at least three of them in the room. After another pause, which seemed to last hours, the door was gently opened about six inches and, as the light rested momentarily on my face, was closed with a bang.

"Heads up," shouted a voice, "the 'busies' are here."

In a moment there was confusion, and knowing it was no use waiting any longer I threw my whole weight on the door with such force that I fell headlong into the

room, on to the table, carrying the lock and bolt with me.

The room could not have been more than twelve foot square, and, with the centre table and a bedstead, there wasn't much room to move about, yet there were the three men—"Hoppy," the big man, and another whom we had not seen before—busily engaged in the very act of making counterfeit coin. In falling on the table I knocked over two moulds for florins and half-crowns.

Showing no sign of fear the men faced us, and without waiting for explanations the big man, with a fierce oath, and saying, "This is what you want, isn't it?" lifted from the fire a saucepan full of molten metal and swished the contents full at us.

To our good fortune, and owing to lack of space, his hand struck "Hoppy," who received most of the metal down his neck, the remainder spreading itself over our clothes and on the walls, where it hung like silver.

Each of us selecting our man, a struggle took place to see who were the masters of the situation. Although we came out on top they never gave in, and we were compelled to send for assistance before we could get them to the station.

In addition to the two moulds I had knocked over there were others for the making of sixpences and shillings, together with a number of coins apparently made that night for circulation in the provinces the following week.

The men were committed for trial, and all were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

Some admiration for these men cannot be withheld, for not only did they admit without interruption the whole of the evidence, but actually praised our behaviour.

"It was a fair 'cop,'" said the big man; "they were too good for us, and we'll take our time like men."

This is a most unusual thing amongst criminals, who invariably discredit police evidence in the hopes of influencing the jury.

At the expiration of all Old Bailey trials for counterfeit coining the moulds and coins are sent to the Royal Mint. In the old days the pewter pot provided the coiner with all the material he used at his work. The public-house keeper who lost a beer pot always expected to get it

back in counterfeit coin, and was on the watch for it for days.

The usual make-up of the present day outfit consists of plaster of paris, antimony, powdered glass, a file, and a melting-pot, the possession of which would soon lead to your appearance before a magistrate in a very unpopular part of his court.

CHAPTER XIV

A DAY WITH THE BOOTLEGGERS

Wholesale arrests—Unexpected meeting with a "whisky purveyor"—
"Waterloo"—A van-load of suspects—The Lithuanian restaurant—
More arrests—"Sucking the monkey"—Cold feet—Scenes in the charge-
room—"Lockchen" stew—An unconscious informer.

SMUGGLING in many forms are rampant during my early days, and the Custom and Revenue officers found Whitechapel and St. George's-in-the-East their happy hunting grounds. Illicit stills for the making of spirits were discovered, sometimes to the extent of hundreds of gallons at one haul. Smugglers—like coiners—were usually more active at night, and hunting them created much excitement, but had to be carried out with the utmost care and secrecy, for the smallest mistake meant the whole of the spirit being emptied down a drain and all your time wasted.

After a while I became wise to the fact that there was as much interest in tracking down smugglers as in looking for thieves, more perhaps, since the Excise authorities paid quite good rewards, whereas in trying to catch a thief often the only reward you got was a good hiding.

Another dutiable article which often found its way into the East End without the paying of duties was saccharine. A pound weight of saccharine is roughly worth as much as a hundredweight of sugar, and many a hundred pounds of smuggled saccharine have I unearthed, on one occasion arresting nine people in one house who were in possession of ninety pounds weight of it.

To return to spirits, however, I have used the heading of this chapter, "A Day with the Bootleggers," as meaning to account for a normally busy day with those unlawfully engaged in "rummaging," "broaching," and to what is known by those in the traffic by the delightful name of "sucking the monkey."

The London Docks, I believe I am justified in saying, have the largest bonded warehouses in the world, and discharge more wine and spirits than any other city, a state of things which creates many temptations for those engaged in the handling of the goods.

All sorts of devices are resorted to in pilfering, and the one to which I have referred—"sucking the monkey"—is, or at all events was, the most common.

It is done by drilling a hole in a cask of spirit, inserting a rubber tube, and then sucking with the mouth till the liquid flows, the tube end being then turned into a bottle or some other receptacle till sufficient has been taken. A wooden plug is then forced into the hole, cut off flush with the cask, and smeared over with anything that will cover up the dirty work.

This trick is sometimes performed merely for the purpose of getting a drink, a very risky business, for the fumes of pure spirit easily overcome those unused to it.

I remember once finding a boy of eleven years of age so helplessly drunk that I had to call in a doctor, who found it necessary to resort to the use of a stomach pump. The lad had been with a carman carrying bonded goods, and following the bad example set by the man had "sucked the monkey" so freely that he became unconscious.

On the occasion of my first arrest on the particular day of which I am writing I am afraid I acted a little too precipitately, and I fear I must have rather staggered the very bulky-chested young man whom I stopped. He was of medium build, and his chest was so out of proportion to the rest of him that he looked like the advertisement for a well-known bicycle tyre.

"What's wrong with your chest?" I asked, and his answer, which cannot be set down in print, was such a shocker that I hastened to inform him that I was a police officer before he could think of any more.

However, I continued to be imprudent, for slipping my hand to the bottom of his waistcoat I pulled it, with the result that four bottles of whisky fell to the ground with a crash, and I had the mortification of seeing my principal evidence pouring down a drain. All I had left were the four "shoulders" with corks and capsules intact.

The man was almost convulsed with anger.

"Clever, ain't it," he shouted. "Now what are you going to do?"

I had to admit to myself that it was certainly anything but clever, and I was very much in doubt as to what I *was* going to do. However, much to the amusement of the crowd that had gathered, I picked up the pieces, and suggested to the man that he should accompany me to the station.

He worked in the warehouse of a well-known distillery, but while they admitted that the whisky was of their own particular brand they declined to prosecute. Accordingly he was charged at the police court with the unlawful possession of four bottles of whisky, and immediately challenged me to produce proof.

"How do you know it was whisky?" he asked.

"Exactly," put in the magistrate, "how *do* you know? Did you taste it?"

May I say—*en passant*—that this magistrate was still presiding over a London police court until a few months ago, and though always impartial, was very exact.

"There was nothing left to taste," I said.

"Then you're not a teetotaler," went on His Worship.

"Don't be afraid to say so if you aren't."

I was beginning to wonder whether the case was between him and me, when the prisoner interrupted.

"Pity 'e ain't got something better to do so near Christmas," he said.

"It is a pity," said His Worship, "and if it weren't for people like you, he probably *would* have. You'll pay a fine or go to prison."

I am sure that until that moment the prisoner thought he was going to get away with it.

However, there was a stir in court, and two men immediately put themselves forward to pay the fine, an incident which presented me with another opportunity of putting a spoke in the wheel of these illicit traders. One of the men so anxious to help the prisoner I knew to be the licensee of a notorious back-street public-house.

He was a Russian Jew, and how he and many others like him at that time ever managed to get a licence is beyond me. Anyhow it was the chance I had long been waiting for, and I remained just outside the court till, as

I expected, the Russian and my ex-prisoner went off together.

I quickly formed a definite plan and followed them, but I had to be very careful, for the publican knew me even better than the other. His house had long since been suspected, and on more than one occasion I had visited it.

Its real name was " Waterloo " (it was that to many), but it was better known as " Fixed Bayonets " because of the many " scenes " which took place there, due, it is said, to the cheap spirits. I know that spirits, beer and wine were very much cheaper in those days, but when you find a full measure of rum and coffee being supplied at three halfpence it looks as if the matter needs a little investigation.

When I started out that morning I had several matters on hand which might have proved cases of crime, but here to my hand was a job that looked like providing a real bit of detective work, and I revelled in it.

The two men were deep in conversation, and keeping to the back streets made things easy for shadowing. Suddenly, however, they turned and made for the main road, where they boarded a tramcar, but the old horse car of those days was a slow moving affair and I had no difficulty in overtaking it. My men had gone on top, so taking a seat inside I remained partially obscured by a newspaper till they got out.

Still keeping them in sight, I stopped in the car a little longer and alighted just in time to see them enter the restaurant, a rendezvous for aliens of many nationalities.

It was no use my attempting to follow them in, for had I done so the whole place would have been empty in a few minutes. It was very rarely indeed that we ventured into these haunts of criminals, for if you disturb these people in their nest too often they go to roost elsewhere, and then you have to begin finding them all over again.

I was beginning to get very hungry, but what I believed to be a certainty made me forget it. However, I didn't have to wait very long, for presently up drove a horse and van which I knew belonged to my Russian friend. From my place of vantage it was impossible to see what the van contained, but the sight of the three men sitting in front, whom I knew very well and knew nothing good

of, made me more sure than ever that my vigilance would be rewarded.

Presently one of them got down and went into the restaurant, and I thought it only he'd stay there long enough this might be my opportunity to find out what was in the van, so passing it on the other side of the road I crossed and peeped in the back.

My impatience was nearly my undoing, for protruding from under a covering were unmistakable signs of more than one man's feet. I did not appear to have been noticed, and as it was not yet time to act I went back to keep further observation, the thing having now become much too interesting to make waiting monotonous.

The next move came from the Russian licensee, who came out of the restaurant, and going to the back of the van, lifted the cover and was handed what appeared to be a crate of beer. He was about to return to the restaurant when out of the van jumped two men. I had been seen, but I knew them equally as well as they knew me. They darted off to the shout of "Stop them!" which was taken up by the crowd which followed them.

Into the restaurant I went after the Russian and caught him just as he was handing the crate to the proprietor.

"It's all right," he said, "I'm only bringing him some beer for a party to-night."

"Let me have a look at the beer," I answered.

The "beer" was whisky, six bottles of it, bearing the same name as that on the four bottles for which I had arrested my bulky friend earlier in the day. He, by the way, was sitting close by looking very uneasy.

There was no time to discuss the contents further for the moment, as a hubbub outside warned me that something was happening, so with a caution to those present I went out to find the two runaways being hustled back by two of my fellow officers of the C.I.D., and as they were resisting, the situation was not too pleasant.

Told they would be taken to the police station, they were bundled back into the van they had just left, and I noticed to my amazement that the two men who had been sitting in front with the third man were still there. They told me later that as they knew I had seen and recognised them they didn't think it worth while to run away.

Up to this point I had nothing to go on, as to the charge I might have against them all, but suspicion, but you have to take a chance sometimes or the thief will surely cheat you, as this case should show.

While my colleagues took charge of the restaurant and the men in the van I examined the inside of the vehicle for some further evidence. It was loaded with beer crates, but unless I was mistaken it was going to prove the strangest beer I had ever tasted, and, since the magistrate had queried my intelligence that morning, I certainly must secure evidence by tasting. I may add that when we got the stuff to the station all my chums wanted to secure evidence.

Satisfied that the booty was whisky, I had the four prisoners escorted to the station by some uniform officers who had arrived, then back I went into the restaurant, where by this time they had doubtless had the opportunity of concocting a story to explain how they had come into possession of the "contraband."

Thieving and lying invariably go hand in hand, but liars should have good memories, and forgetting all they had told me before each of them said the stuff was brought there by the men now on the way to the station. The Russian flatly denied bringing the crate into the restaurant and declared he had no previous knowledge of the men who came in with him, whilst the proprietor, forgetting all about the party, said that if he had known there was anything wrong he would have called the police and given the men in charge.

"Pick up that crate and come along with me," I said, but there was no move from either of them.

"Very well," I added to the proprietor, "it's on your premises and I shall hold you responsible."

This was the signal for a display of anger and "temperament" that can only be shown by a foreigner. The proprietor, who, by the way, rejoiced in the name of Petroff, lifted the crate, and was only prevented from smashing it over the head of the Russian by my seizing him from behind.

The scene for a few minutes exactly resembled those we are now accustomed to see on the screen in the pictures of the Chicago underworld. Seated at tables in pew-like enclosures were some thirty pugnacious-looking repre-

sentatives of all the Baltic and Black Sea provinces. Looking like caged animals they only kept their seats because they thought the place was surrounded outside, and when I said "clear" they scooted like frightened jackals. Many of them I knew, and many no doubt were "wanted," but there was time for them at a later date.

We were often told by our superiors to use discretion, and I can assure you that on this occasion my discretion was worthy of a judge and a whole jury. Petroff was a powerful man who had been known to fight a dozen of his customers at a time, and in his present mood was ready for anything. Apart from taking the restaurant with him, it looked as though there was little hope of getting him to the station, and there was certainly not a lot of evidence against him at the moment.

However, except for the cat who in jumping for safety fell into a large pot of soup, little damage was done, and telling Petroff that I believed his story (I didn't say which one), I suggested he should accompany me to the station and repeat it to Inspector Hinmoff.

We had an officer of that name, and it appealed so much to the proprietor that he immediately consented, so off we went, Petroff even volunteering to carry the crate.

Just before we left, Mrs. Petroff hooked the cat from the soup with a pair of tongs, and the poor wretch, looking like a large pot of ointment, bolted for the street. I don't think I should have cared to dine at the Lithuanian restaurant that night.

Four queer-looking objects were shortly afterwards marched into Leman Street Police Station, and one with most expressive face, and who clung tightly to a loaded beer crate, announced in a stentorian voice that he had come to see Inspector 'Im-off!

When told that this particular officer was not there, and also that he would be detained, Petroff, for a moment looking quite hurt, and then dropping his load, suddenly turned on the Russian, and seizing that worthy by the throat was only prevented from strangling him by the united efforts of several police officers, who separated them, and put them in different cells.

All this time I had been most anxious to call at "Waterloo," for news in this district flies, and I knew at once it reached the place that the proprietor was in

custody I should find precious little trace of contraband. So having seen all the suspects—of whom there were now eight—made comfortable, I went off to that famously named house.

Together with another officer I entered to find a very demure young woman behind the counter, who in answer to my inquiry as to the whereabouts of the landlord vouchsafed not a word. She was a member of the family, and having, of course, received tidings of the landlord's arrest long since, was too crafty to say anything.

She had apparently anticipated my intentions and made no move to stop me going behind the bar, but just as I was about to take note of the stock I heard a noise in the cellar which sounded like the crackling of burning wood. Remarking to the woman, "There's something burning downstairs," the fair Hebe immediately found her tongue.

"Is there?" she said. "It's a pity it isn't you."

Leaving my mate I made for the cellar, where I found two men actively engaged in breaking wooden cases and hurrying them on to a big brazier. There was no doubt as to the identity of the cases, as, despite the efforts to burn them, the name of the distillers was plainly to be seen. Seizing a pail of beer waste that stood in a corner, I flung it with all my strength into the burning pan. The immediate result was anything but pleasant, for overlooking the closeness of everything, the gush of hot stinking steam nearly choked the life out of me.

I had another shock, too, for following an unearthly scream a man staggered out from behind the fire. Having recognised my voice from upstairs, so he told me afterwards, he had endeavoured to hide, with the result that he caught the full force of my fire-quenching activities.

His face was so badly burned and blackened that I at once allowed him to go. The others were very submissive and volunteered to pack up the wood, with the result that we recovered the remains of some twenty whisky cases identical with those found in the van.

Returning to the bar I was in the act of searching a cupboard under the counter when the door of the public bar opened and a man entered. As it was getting dark and my head was below the bar he had evidently not seen me, for, placing two large jugs on the counter, he

said to the woman, "Where's the guv'nor?" Before she could answer I showed myself, and the man made a bolt for the door, leaving the jugs behind him.

Jumping over the counter I overtook him just as he was climbing into a van, the horse of which, being on the move, I had to seize by the head in order to stop.

"What do you want me for?" shouted the man, but I was very circumspect in my answer, for there were two men in the van, and with a little tact I might, I thought, bag the lot.

"Be a man," I said. "You don't want to get a woman into trouble, do you?"

This appealed to him, and he stopped the horse. The others were very fidgety, and looked as if they were going to make a bolt for it, so I reminded them that it was no use attempting to get away as I knew where to find them. I may say that on this occasion I stretched my imagination a little, for as a matter of fact I hadn't the vaguest idea who they were. But it worked, and they remained in the van. Without any pressing the carman returned with me to the house, where I inquired as to the contents of the jars. After some reflection, he said:

"I may as well tell you the truth; I have been bringing it here regularly for a long time, but she (indicating the woman) don't know anything about it."

While I did not believe the latter part of his statement I admired him for it, for if there was one thing I abhorred more than another it was to incriminate a woman, and though this one had been anything but pleasant to me, and not at all helpful, I didn't blame her under the circumstances, and decided to keep her out of it.

There was no doubt as to the nature of the contraband this time, but in the presence of all I tasted it and pronounced it to be whisky—well over proof. My action provoked the carman into saying, with some humour, that if I took him into custody he would report me for drinking whilst on duty.

"Now let's see what's in the van," I said, and followed by the carman I went out to investigate. Asking what the two men were doing in the van, I was told that they were "trouncers," an occupation with which I have dealt in a previous chapter, and which made them equally liable with the carman to arrest.

Emptying the horse's nose-bag on to the floor of the van I found, as I expected to find, the implement for "sucking the monkey." The men had been engaged in delivering spirits from the London Docks to a bonded vault in the City, and by the "sucking the monkey" process had tapped the casks to the extent of ten gallons.

There were three more jars hidden under some sacks, but the men were not giving anything away, so for the moment I could not find out where they had been going, and they now went the same way as the other two, to find their way finally to His Majesty's Customs.

Leaving my colleague in charge of the public-house and the two men in the cellar, I put the whole of the contraband back in the van, and together with its three occupants drove towards Leman Street.

It was now dark, and as we made our way through the back streets we were a very subdued and uninteresting party, until the carman decided to liven things up a bit by suddenly refusing to drive the horse any further.

Flinging down the reins, he remarked:

"I bet you can't drive him; he'll kick you off the seat if you touch the reins."

I knew very little about horses, but not to be beaten in this way I picked up the reins and shook them in an attempt to urge the horse along.

The carman proved a very good prophet, for in a moment up came one of the beast's legs, smashing clean through the front panel and very nearly unseating one of my captives. This provided a great deal of amusement for the three men, and also for the crowd which quickly gathered. Nothing could prevail upon the carman to resume driving, and there we had to stay until a uniform officer arrived and led the horse to the station.

Whilst amusing themselves at my expense the men carried on a conversation in back and rhyming slang with which I was quite familiar, though they were not aware of the fact.

One of the sentences ran thus: "Di ekil to tup a nav epor on his bushel and peck for holler boys holler boys, and netsaf in the rewot taom," which being translated means: "I'd like to put a van rope on his neck for a collar, boys, and fasten him in the Tower moat."

Getting nearer the police station the carman became

serious, and realising the likelihood of imprisonment endeavoured to get his confederates out of trouble, and at the same time make use of them, so he arranged—by again speaking in slang—that they should seek the aid of others, who in the event of a fine might be induced to pay. I won't bother the reader with the jargon again, but put into plain English it went:

"I'll tell the tale; you keep your mouth closed and know nothing. If it works, go to the 'Star and Fountain,' and tell old Schmidt to be careful on Sunday; tell him to look out for the old man, and get him to take the stuff to Ludwig at the 'Angel and Trumpet,' and tell Schmidt if he doesn't pay the fine I'll 'put him away.' "

Unwittingly they were giving me some very good information which would, I believed, lead to the discovery of a secret concerning illicit spirit traffic which had troubled the district for some time.

As we approached the station there was one thing that troubled me. Even allowing for the fact that it was a cold day I could not understand why my feet had become almost petrified; so much so, in fact, that when we reached the station gates I couldn't stand up. Looking to the floor of the van I discovered the reason. One of the men had cleverly removed the bung from one of the jars of whisky, and then turned the jar on its side in such a manner that the raw spirit had steadily and unnoticed filled my boots.

Staring me straight in the face, the carman, a typical cockney wag, said:

"And now you know the tale of the empty jar."

"Can't see anything clever in that," I answered.

"Of course it's clever," he replied. "You wouldn't have known it if it hadn't leaked out."

I had to laugh, as he followed up his joke with:

"I'll bet you what's left that you don't tell the magistrate the tale in the morning."

We now had thirteen prisoners in all, and a sorting out process followed for the purpose of preferring the various charges. The majority of the men were concerned with being in possession of a van load of proprietary Scotch whisky, and as for the second time that day the owners declined to identify it or take any action it was referred to the officers of the Excise and Customs, who took possession of it and prosecuted. The others were charged with broach-

ing and stealing bonded spirits, having in their possession spirits without licence, hawking spirits, and many other things subject to both fines and imprisonment.

My Russian acquaintance was more or less concerned in all the charges, because his house was used for receiving, harbouring contraband, and smuggling. Pandemonium is the only word to describe what happened when they were all placed in the dock—the dock was used in all police stations at that time—and it was a case of “when thieves fall out honest people come into their own,” for they immediately started to give each other away.

But the climax came with the entrance of Mrs. Petroff with some food for her husband. Apparently taking advantage of the temporary absence of the constable from the station door, she walked straight into the room where the men were being charged, where the sight of her husband in his unfortunate position sent her frantic.

Never shall I forget the scene that followed. Mrs. Petroff was carrying a large enamel saucepan, and whether she forgot what it contained, or if it was because of it, she aimed a mighty blow at the Russian's head, but the inspector in charge, anticipating her intentions, dived forward to stop her.

While this was fortunate for the Russian it was certainly the reverse for him, for the officer, a fine big man with long black square-cut whiskers, received the contents of the saucepan full in his face. The contents in question were a sort of stew—a very special dish known in the Yiddish jargon as “lockchen.” Mrs. Petroff was immediately seized and without any further ceremony “emptied” into the street.

But the inspector! It would need a far abler pen than mine to describe what he looked like. I was seized with an uncontrollable fit of laughter—I laughed till I felt as if I'd contracted lockjaw.

“Wait till I get this——muck out of my eyes,” shouted my colleague, “I'll make you laugh.”

The majority of the alien crowd stood mute, but not so my irresponsible cockney carman, who thoroughly enjoyed the whole thing.

“Why don't you wipe it off with your whiskers?” he shouted.

It is going away from the story, but I must tell you of

a little sequel that occurred years later. I was sitting in a well-known Corner House with a lady, both of us looking at the menu and being very undecided as to what we should eat.

Suddenly a voice behind us said: "Try some lockchen, but keep it out of your eyes." It was my old friend the inspector. "No soup," said the lady when she heard the story.

The next morning at Thames Police Court we were provided with some interesting and quite unsought data in connection with the illicit spirit business, for the court was full of "suspects" who had heard the news and foolishly put in an appearance, which amply confirmed the information volunteered by the prisoners at the police station. We knew where to look in future.

The fines in many cases being trebled, most of the men were unable to pay and went to prison, but where the fines were paid we received liberal rewards from the Excise authorities. No objection being offered to our cockney friend being granted bail, and his fine being subsequently paid, he afterwards became very useful to us as an unwitting informer, because being kept under strict observation he unconsciously led us to the bootleggers' "dives."

Sunday after Sunday brought us to their haunts, where he was invariably found, but we always let him go as he was more useful to us at liberty than under lock and key. This went on till he became suspected by his friends, and finally he had to leave the district.

As my story was only intended to be "a day with the bootleggers," which, in fact, apart from police court proceedings, it actually was, I must now leave this—to me, at all events—fascinating subject, but one of these days I hope to return to it.

CHAPTER XV

THE SIDNEY STREET SIEGE

Houndsditch and the murder of three police officers—Arrest of Perkoff—Tottenham outrages—Letters from the brother of "Peter the Painter"—Tracking the anarchists, and the finding of Gardstein's body—The home of "Peter the Painter"—The trail to Sidney Street—The Battle—Calling out the Guards and artillery—How I was wounded and escaped over the roof—The King's Medal—I meet "Peter the Painter" in Australia.

" . . . but the crime itself was organised by Stalin, now head of the Soviet Government."

In a letter, lying before me as I write, sent to me some years ago by none other than the brother of the notorious "Peter the Painter," these words, more than all the rest, claimed my attention, and have since given me furiously to think.

They refer to the Houndsditch murder case which took place in December, 1910, when three policemen were killed and others wounded by desperadoes. The writer makes every attempt to exculpate his brother and says, "The fellows that killed the policemen were Fritz Svaars and Joseph Sokoloff, who perished in the Sidney Street fire."

There is certainly no one more qualified to speak than this man, who, though brother to the "Painter," actually worked for the forces of law and order against Peter and his gang.

Before I deal with Houndsditch and Sidney Street, however, it is necessary to go back some years, to 1908 to be precise, when Nihilists and Anarchists, the prototypes of the modern "Red," were over-running the East End of London, where I was stationed at the time.

There is no doubt that Russian *agents provocateur* were already at work, sowing the seeds of the revolutionary movement which those forefathers of Bolshevism, Trotsky, Lenin, and Stalin, hoped would permeate the Metropolis and thence spread all over the world.

Ever since the budding Bolsheviks had held their first reunion in Minsk in 1908, under the comparatively innocuous title of the "First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party," Stalin had been attracted to the Movement, and we find him organising a big strike at Baku a few years later, while many of the wells were set on fire and immense damage done to machinery.

Though Stalin was sent to prison, his agents in London were busy, and so, in 1908, there came about the great strike of Jewish bakers in the Whitechapel district, organised by one Perkoff, perhaps Russia's first *agent provocateur* to operate in London.

It was a strike organised on the genuine Chicago "racketeer" lines, a method to which the Russian Bolsheviks (or Anarchists as they then styled themselves) were very partial.

It fell to my lot to effect the arrest of Perkoff, which I did at the old Jubilee Hall in Whitechapel, then the headquarters of the Anarchists.

Perkoff was recommended for deportation, and what eventually happened to him I do not know; but soon I had good reason to know that the work which he and his fellow agents had been accomplishing in the East End had not been in vain, for the very next year saw the tragic events at Tottenham, when a man-hunt across the fields and through the streets led to death and injury to both police and civilians. As will be recalled, a gang of the Russian desperadoes terrorised the whole of a populous quarter, and boarding a train actually used it as an armoured car would be used in battle.

It was an earnest of what lengths to which these ruffians were prepared to go, and also of the widespread nature of their organisation, and was moreover a foretaste of the terrible tragedies of Houndsditch and Sidney Street.

All this time I was engaged in an attempt to locate the nerve-centre of this nefarious organisation which was fast reducing the East End to a state resembling Chicago in its hey-day of gangs and graft. The deeper I went into the matter the more evident it became to me that here was no ordinary gang of thieves or murderers, but a widespread ramification drawing its inspiration and its life-blood from some hidden but powerful source.

That this source was Nihilist, Anarchist, or Bolshevik

Russia—call it what you will—I have never doubted, and my surmise is corroborated, as has been seen at the beginning of this chapter, by the man of all others most qualified to speak, except, of course, the notorious “Painter” himself, now dead, but of whom I shall have a good deal to say later on.

I will go further and say that, in my considered opinion, it was only the outbreak at Sidney Street which saved London from becoming the forcing-bed of Bolshevism.

Events were now hastening to their tragic climax, when the slow and patient trend of my investigations was rudely interrupted by a sudden urgent call from the City Police late one wild December night.

It appeared that a man who was passing along Cutler Street, Houndsditch, had heard suspicious noises coming from the rear of some premises occupied by a firm of jewellers named Harris. This man had promptly notified the constables on the beat, who, after an inspection of the premises, were satisfied that all was not well and promptly gave the alarm. Little did he imagine what a hornets’ nest he was stirring up.

A few minutes later the place was surrounded. The detective-sergeant in charge, thinking that he had his men safely cornered, then sent a constable round to the back door of the jeweller’s shop, which he found open. Noticing a man standing just inside this door, and never for an instant connecting him with the burglary or attempted burglary, the officer attempted to engage him in conversation. Without vouchsafing any reply the man turned and entered the building, appearing to the officer to be actuated merely by curiosity as to what had occurred inside.

Before the other officers, advised by their colleague, had actually reached the doorway a number of armed desperadoes burst out of it, shooting haphazardly right and left, but shooting to kill; and kill they did, for three officers fell to the ground, killed outright, whilst others were wounded.

The police, unarmed, and far from suspecting such a reception, simply stood no chance whatever; it was just a massacre. The sergeant himself probably owed his life to the fact that he was in plain clothes, the uniforms evidently being the principal target.

Covering their retreat by accurate and sustained fire, the gang were able to make good their escape, and by the

time help was available they had disappeared. Where were they to be found?

This was where I came in. It was more than likely that these men, who were anything but the ordinary burglar type, belonged to the sinister organisation which was causing me and my colleagues so many sleepless nights. The mere fact that they were all armed, did not hesitate to shoot, and shot to kill, at once linked them up in my opinion with the gang which had perpetrated the Tottenham outrage, and which paid more than lip-service to the sinister little band of figures who were already leading Russia to her ruin.

Arriving on the scene of the encounter, I found the street crowded with people who were being held back by a strong force of police.

The houses all round were pock-marked with bullets; hundreds of rounds must have been fired.

The police casualties were: Sergeants Bentley and Tucker, dead; Sergeant Bryant and Constables Choate and Woodhams, seriously wounded. Unfortunately, Choate died in hospital, whither he had been speedily conveyed; he had been shot no fewer than eight times. Even then, so I was informed by a surgeon at the hospital, he might have pulled through had it not been that one of the bullets, striking a button, forced this and some fragments of cloth into the wound, causing septicæmia and death.

Not much more could be learned from an inspection of the premises, and I was forced to rely for my further investigations on the succinct account of the tragedy which had been furnished me by the City sergeant, Strongman. The first task which confronted us was to ascertain the probable direction the fugitives had taken. Like Strongman, I had little doubt that they had gone to earth somewhere in my district. But where? Whitechapel is a rabbit-warren at best, and finding a needle in a haystack seemed child's play in comparison with the task which confronted us.

By dint of systematic questioning of the residents in Cutler Street, I was able to establish the fact that the desperadoes had kept together in their flight, and had passed in a compact body with their pistols threatening instant death to anyone foolhardy enough to bar their

way, out of Cutler Street, through Middlesex Street and High Street, Whitechapel, into the Commercial Road. Some witnesses of their flight were able to add the information that on the way they had been joined by two women.

Finally, after much patient investigation, we stumbled on a man who really could tell us something of value; he was in the act of changing from one bus to another in the Commercial Road, at Gardner's Corner, when his attention was attracted by the sight of a party of men. The only reason, however, why he paid any attention to them (for they had by now hidden their weapons) was because they were carrying a man who appeared to have been hurt. Our informant had actually inquired whether he could be of any assistance, but had been rather curtly advised to mind his own business. It looked, therefore, as if at least one of the gang had been wounded.

How were we to find him? The gang seemed to have vanished into thin air after they were seen at Gardner's Corner; evidently they had broken up and made good their individual escapes. My colleague and I spent the whole of the night combing the district, interrogating the keepers of the cheap doss-houses frequented by foreigners, but without result.

As so often happens, light was to come from a totally unexpected direction.

Very shortly after my return in the early hours of the morning to Lemon Street Police Station, where I was engaged in making out my report, a mysterious telephone call came through.

"I dare not tell you who I am," said the voice, "it would be far too dangerous. It may, however, be well worth your while to pay a visit to a house in Grove Street, No. 49. You will find there a man who is dying from a bullet wound. Early this morning I was urgently called—I am a doctor—by two women; they said little and would give no information about themselves, merely asking me to come at once to a man who was very ill. On reaching the house in Grove Street I found a man lying on a bed, and at once saw that he had been shot; though in a very bad way he was still conscious, but I was quite unable to extract from him any information about himself or how he received his wound. I have told you that I dare not reveal my own identity. As I came away I was

given to understand that if I imparted any information whatever to the police my life would be forfeit. I consider it my duty, however, to give you this information at least. There is something terribly sinister about the whole matter."

Before I could put any questions to him, my mysterious informant had rung off. Who was he? Did he subsequently pay the penalty for his action? I shall never know: but I have only too good reason to appreciate the long arm of these desperadoes, an arm which can reach, as you will read anon, from London to the back-blocks of Australia!

Well, it certainly looked as if our friend at Grove Street might be the same man who had been carried by his comrades the previous night at Gardner's Corner. The next job was to prove the fact.

It was at this stage that I informed Inspector Wensley of what had occurred. It may be of interest to mention here that when I started on the bottom rung of my career as a humble constable in Whitechapel, I shared lodgings with another humble constable, the man who was to rise to superintendent and Chief Constable and leave an imperishable name in the annals of Scotland Yard.

Wensley promptly decided to join me in my dangerous task; for danger there was in plenty. It was known that Grove Street was a notorious rendezvous for desperadoes to whom the killing of a police officer was a matter of trifling importance, as they had proved on more than one occasion. Wensley was unarmed, but I took the precaution to "pack a gun." Taking a few picked men with us, we set off on a quest which promised thrills in plenty, though probably not of an agreeable description.

When we arrived at the house, Wensley remained in charge whilst I entered the dwelling. Nothing of interest on the ground floor with the exception of a little Jewish cobbler who didn't look dangerous, but with whom I left an officer, just in case. . . .

There were two rooms on the first floor. Approaching one of these as noiselessly as possible, and throwing the door open suddenly, I dashed in with my revolver ready. The only inmates were two women who were busily engaged in burning a pile of letters and photographs.

The first thing I did was to put out the fire and take

charge of the documents. Leaving the women under guard, I rushed the other room, but here again there proved to be no need for fire-arms. The sole occupant was a man lying on a bed in the corner. Approaching him carefully, I soon saw that there was no need for caution; he was stone-dead. But death had overtaken him not so long since, for his body was still warm. Turning back his shirt I saw a terrible wound, from which a bullet was protruding.

Under the pillow was an automatic of the latest type, fully loaded, with two extra magazines, also fully charged. Other rounds of ammunition were scattered about the room. There must have been several hundred rounds altogether. A few magazines were in the pockets of his coat (which hung from the bed-rail), and on a chair; but the most significant discovery was that of a painter's palette, colours and brushes, and a small painting signed "Peter." Thus was "Peter the Painter" first connected with the case.

Returning to the other room, I took possession of a number of documents, including some partly burned photographs, many of which I was able to recognise as well-known Anarchists. All the "exhibits" were collected and sent to headquarters, there to await the trial of the malefactors, when they were caught.

Well, we had raided the nest, but where were the birds? Little more than a fortnight was to elapse before the answer to that question was to come with tragic force.

These days and nights were spent in a gigantic "comb-out" of the East End. Often we went without food or sleep. There was no Christmas for us; such as it was we spent in interminable patrolling of dark alleys and sordid streets, in momentary expectation of some desperate sortie by the wanted men mowing a path with bullets.

We had been able to ascertain that the name of the shot desperado was Gardstein (otherwise known as Mourountzieff), while two of the gang who had been with him on the night of the Houndsditch crime were Fritz Svaars and the supposed "Peter the Painter." (We also ascertained that Gardstein had been accidentally shot by one of his fellow desperadoes during their escape from the jeweller's shop in Houndsditch.)

I say the "supposed" "Peter the Painter" because,

although it is beyond doubt that both the Houndsditch and Sidney Street affairs were inspired and organised by Peter, no tittle of evidence has even been adduced to prove that he took actual part in either outrage. The fact that a man called Sokoloff also went under the name of "Peter" gave rise to the widespread belief, which persists in many quarters until to-day, that "Peter the Painter" was one of the two men who perished in the Sidney Street fire. This is not so. I quote again from a letter from his brother:

"My brother Peter, whose name appeared in some of the documents of the Houndsditch murder case, was here already. So I joined him. He did not live very long; he died in the summer of 1914 in Philadelphia. . . ."

I shall shortly tell you of how I was tracked to Australia by Peter's agents, and how I met him face to face, in a railway train, long after the happenings at Sidney Street.

Eventually my investigations led me to a certain house in Sidney Street, which we suspected as being the lair of the assassins. We knew, at any rate, that the two men whose descriptions tallied closely with those of the two men who had been with Gardstein in the house at Grove Street had been seen at No. 100 Sidney Street.

So we come to the dramatic events of January 2nd and 3rd, 1911, culminating in the astounding "Battle of Sidney Street," a drama probably unparalleled in the annals of crime, and one which cut short my career in the Force, since I fell, apparently mortally wounded, on the "field of battle."

We lost no time in acting on the information received about the house in Sidney Street, and, at midnight on Monday, January 2nd, we had it completely surrounded. Later on we entered the house, and after much trouble elicited the information from a woman living there that Fritz Svaars and the supposed "Peter the Painter" were asleep in a room on the second floor. In the light of this knowledge we decided to evacuate the rest of the inmates of the house. This was a task of some difficulty, and I well remember the trouble I had with a woman of about eighty, who strongly objected to being turned out on such a night, for snow was beginning to fall. However, half

an hour sufficed to clear the premises of all save the unsuspecting desperadoes.

By 7 a.m. practically every doorway within sight of the house contained a police officer. I had been joined by my chiefs, and a group consisting of Chief Inspector Willis, Inspectors Thompson and Hallam of the City Police, together with Detective Wensley and myself had foregathered in the yard exactly opposite No. 100.

I had crossed to the house (the door of which at that time was open) to put some coins in the automatic gas meter in order that we might see anyone attempting to leave, when, contrary to instructions, someone threw some pebbles up at the window. No sooner was this done than the desperadoes opened fire.

The first shot passed through my right boot, injuring my foot. The second struck me just below the heart, passing through my lungs and out through the back. My condition was very precarious, for both lungs were affected, and it was thought that my injuries would prove fatal. The question was how to get me to the hospital?

Climbing a wall bounding the yard of Mann & Crossman's Brewery, Sergeant Boreham, with the assistance of the brewery staff, obtained a stretcher, on which I was placed. The stretcher was then lifted on to the roof of an outhouse, from which it was to be lowered into the brewery yard.

Unfortunately the assassins perceived this manœuvre and promptly reopened fire. The bullets began to hail around me, so summoning up the last remnants of my strength I rolled off the stretcher on to the outhouse roof, and managed to let myself down into the brewery yard, where help was speedily forthcoming and I was conveyed to the London Hospital. During this second volley Detective Dyer was shot through the hand, but fortunately the wound was not serious. The police then opened fire, with the result that the murderers' fire began to slacken.

Doubtless the sequel will be familiar to the minds of most of my readers: how a detachment of the Scots Guards arrived from the Tower at about 10.30 a.m. and promptly took up strategic positions, whence they poured a steady fire into the second-floor room. This was merely the signal for a renewed outburst of firing by the besieged, directed chiefly at the windows opposite. Shortly after midday,

Mr. Winston Churchill, then Home Secretary, arrived on the scene, accompanied by other high officials. Mr. Churchill promptly took charge of the "siege" operations, showing, as usual, the utmost disregard for his personal safety.

The fire of the soldiers was augmented by that of detectives and police officers ensconced in the brewery yard and in other points of vantage. It seemed as if nothing could live in the inferno to which No. 100 Sidney Street was now reduced, the more so when at about 1 p.m. every window in the house was blown out. Still, the assassins kept up a spasmodic fire.

Shortly, however, smoke and flames were seen to be issuing from the first floor windows, and the rest of the house was soon alight. By two o'clock the whole house was a blazing furnace, and it seemed as though the occupants must have perished. An inspector was therefore ordered to cross the street and burst in the entrance which had been closed by the besieged; at the same time firemen began to play on the building, which by now was completely gutted. It seemed impossible that anyone could remain alive in that dreadful place, but every eye was alert in case the desperadoes should make a final dash for freedom.

Then from the back of the building rang out two single shots. The desperadoes were known to be running short of ammunition. Trapped in the burning house, and faced by certain death, would they make a bolt for it, or had they saved the last two rounds for themselves? We shall never know.

Thus ended the "Battle of Sidney Street," in which two of the most desperate gunmen in history fought against about a thousand police and soldiers, maintaining a withering fire for over five hours.

It was all over. As the fire engines played on the smouldering ruins, there dashed up at the gallop two field-guns of the Royal Horse Artillery. They were not needed, and even if they had been, I cannot for the life of me see how they could have been used with safety in that teeming warren of houses, nor can I say why the military were brought into the affair at all. It was certainly not the request of the police.

It has always been a mystery as to how the fire broke

out, but, in my opinion, the miscreants themselves set fire to the building, hoping to escape under cover of the smoke. Instead of this they were caught in the trap, being either burned to death or perishing at their own hands with the firing of those two final shots.

Further casualties were to mark the day, for a number of firemen were injured by the collapse of a wall, and a member of the Salvage Corps was killed.

Such then are the bald facts of that unforgettable day. What lies behind them?

Among the debris were found the remains of two charred bodies. One we knew was that of Fritz Svaars; the other, I now know, was *not* that of "Peter the Painter." The bodies were unrecognisable; indeed, it was only possible to say with certainty that one of them was that of a man; rumours had been current that a woman was present in the house, and a woman's wig was really found in the ruins.

It is left to the brother of "Peter the Painter" to identify the other occupant of the house, the colleague of Svaars, as Joseph Sokoloff, otherwise known as "Peter," a fact which, as I have said, led to his being confounded with the "Painter."

But the "Painter" himself, the brains behind the gang, the ringleader of the Russian *agent provocateurs*, was not in the Sidney Street house that night; and, by the morrow, he had fled to Australia. There I was to meet him.

Three of the desperadoes concerned in the Houndsditch affair had now been accounted for. Gardstein had died at the hands of his own accomplices; Svaars and Sokoloff had perished in the flames. Still the round-up went on, until the police believed that they had accounted for all the members of the gang, with the exception of the redoubtable "Painter" himself.

When the gang was duly sent for trial at the Old Bailey I had recovered sufficiently to attend the trial, where I was accommodated at the solicitors' table.

The upshot of the trial is well known; the whole onus of the Houndsditch and Sidney Street affairs was thrown on the shoulders of "Peter the Painter," the elusive arch-villain, the man who was never caught. Of those charged, the men were acquitted, while a woman was sentenced to

two years' imprisonment, a sentence which was afterwards quashed.

As for me, I lay in hospital for upwards of thirteen weeks, my lungs severely affected, and my eventual recovery something in the nature of a miracle. Even after lengthy sojourns in convalescent homes at Felixstowe and Hove I was not properly cured, and, on the advice of the doctors, decided to take a long sea trip. Accordingly I embarked for Australia, hoping to find on the journey out and during my stay there the tonic I so badly needed.

Before I tell of what happened there, may I just mention one interesting little fact, which I have kept to myself until to-day.

I believe that I am the only police officer (though retired now) alive to whom the King's Medal was awarded and who has never received it! The reason for that is, of course, that at the time I should have received it from His Majesty I was lying between life and death on a hospital bed. I have before me, as I write, a daily paper of February 23rd, 1911, in which there appears my photograph, with the caption: "SERGT. LEESON—one of the police officers who will receive a King's Medal in connection with the Sidney Street occurrences. He was shot on a roof." But I never received it!

In broken health, and with what I hope I may be pardoned for terming "a promising Police career" cut short by no fault of my own, I sailed for Australia.

The cheerful life on board ship, the pleasant company, and the tonic of the sea breezes, soon combined, however, to put me in a happier frame of mind and in a better state of health. I landed therefore in Australia with high hopes for the future, with Sidney Street and all that lay behind it fading like an unpleasant dream. Little did I reckon how soon the "dream" was to be recalled into unpleasant reality.

I have said that the arm of Anarchism and Petrograd, of Bolshevism and Moscow, is a long one, but that it would reach out from London to Australia after so poor a quarry as my unworthy self I little thought. I was soon to be undeceived.

At Albany, Western Australia, our first port of call, I went ashore with some companions, and put up at Mason's Hotel, overlooking the pretty harbour. During a

stroll we were accosted by two foreign-looking individuals, who asked me, "Did you come off that ship?" pointing to the liner. "Yes," I replied. "Why?" "Is there anybody on it of the name of Leeson?" continued the foreigner. "Yes," said I, not liking his looks, "I left him standing on the gangway when I came ashore."

With that they moved off, but the incident had made me a trifle thoughtful. After all I hadn't come thousands of miles in search of health merely to run into the arms of my Russian friends from the East End again. I was not "on duty." I was all for a quiet life. I regained my ship, and was not sorry when she sailed. But I had not thrown off my pursuers.

We sailed from Albany for Melbourne; it had been my intention to proceed to Adelaide, but the railway was not running in those days, and after my meeting with the two Russian agents I had an idea that the high seas would be more healthy than the land.

On our arrival in Melbourne harbour, I was sitting on deck talking to a couple of Revenue officials, having a yarn over the Sidney Street happenings. I should mention that, though it was my wish, for various reasons, to pass as an ordinary traveller on board, my part in the "battle" and in tracking the gang had leaked out during the voyage in the way these things will, so that for some time past I had been jocularly known on board as "Peter the Painter." For Peter was then a figure of almost world importance.

The master-at-arms came up to us and told me that two friends of mine were looking for me, pointing out a couple of men on deck; they were, in fact, my "friends" from Albany. They came up to me and spoke to me, but either did not recognise me, or pretended not to.

"Are you looking for Leeson?" I asked them. "Yes," they said.

"Well, you're out of luck," said I, "he's just gone ashore."

Thanking me, they left the ship. "Couple of frowzy old uncles yer didn't want to see, mate, weren't they?" chipped in a Cockney member of the crew who was passing.

However, I thought it as well to keep track of my "uncles'" movements, so I followed them on shore and

boarded the same tram that they took into the city. Eventually, however, I lost track of them.

From Melbourne I went to Sydney, and decided to take a trip into the Blue Mountains. On the day of my departure, whom should I see in the booking-hall of the Central Station but "Peter the Painter" himself! I knew the "Painter" well by sight, for previous to the Houndsditch and Sidney Street affairs he used to frequent the saloon-bar of the King's Head public-house at the corner of Grove Street and Commercial Road; in fact, there was at one time a photograph of him hanging in the bar.

The house was at that time a favourite rendezvous for Anarchists, and, though I knew most of them by sight, it was impossible to gather much from their conversation, as they always spoke in a Russian dialect. Peter was actually the tenant of No. 49 Grove Street, but, after the night Gardstein was brought there to die, he gave the place a wide berth.

Well, I booked my ticket, paying no apparent attention to Peter, and chose an empty compartment. After a short time we drew up at a wayside station, and you can imagine my surprise and discomfiture when the door of my compartment opened and in walked Peter. He must have watched me on the train at Sydney, entered another compartment, and transferred to mine at the first stopping-place.

We were alone. I guessed that he would be armed, and sundry strayings of his hand to his hip-pocket, as if to assure himself of the readiness of his gun to his hand, confirmed my guess.

Neither of us gave any sign of recognition, merely passing the time of day and sundry other remarks of little importance.

"Do you come from England?" asked the "Painter."

"Yes," said I, and a silence fell.

It was an awkward situation. There was I alone with an armed desperado, who knew who I was, and who knew that I knew who *he* was. He could not, of course, guess that I was not in Australia on any official mission or that my connection with the Force had been severed through my wound. Further, he could not know that, so far as he was concerned, there was no jot of evidence to prove his participation in either the Houndsditch or Sidney Street

affairs, however gravely the finger of suspicion might point towards him.

To his way of thinking, I must have represented the long arm of the Law stretched out to hale him back from that far continent.

It was a tense moment, he wondering when I was going to show my hand, I asking myself how soon I should be looking down the barrel of a revolver.

But nothing happened.

My destination was a place named Wentworth Falls, and though I would have liked to extract a little information from Peter as to his movements after Sidney Street, I was not exactly sorry when the train lumbered into the station.

Perfunctory farewells on either side, and I stepped out on to the platform, leaving Peter to travel—who knows where? That was the last of him, so far as I was concerned, until I received the letter from his brother saying that he had died in America in 1914.

Thus passed the enigma behind Houndsditch and Sidney Street, the master-mind, who, backed by the Red Terror, plotted and nearly carried into execution a reign of anarchy and terrorism in the heart of the world's greatest metropolis.

Perhaps it was as well for Peter that the train carried him on that day and that he did not follow me to my hotel, for I fell in with a tough crowd of backwoodsmen, who, even in the wilds of Australia, had heard all about Sidney Street and who were most anxious to meet Peter, in which case he would have had no further opportunity to paint anything—red or otherwise.

And so ended, so far as England was concerned, a great plot, staged by men who would literally stick at nothing, desperadoes rendered doubly dangerous by the backing they received from the hidden hand of Red Russia.

It was the beginning of Bolshevism, though it then passed, as I have said, under other names.

The hand of Stalin was apparent all along the dramatic trail which led from Houndsditch and Sidney Street to the Soviets. Born of terrorism, the great conspiracy passed out of London in blood and flames, doubtless as it will pass out of Russia also in the fullness of time.

My Open Letter to Mr. Winston Churchill

Mr. Winston Churchill,

HONOURABLE SIR,

Your profound interest in this and all matters of moment is manifest, and I regret it has not been my privilege to have brought to your notice these particulars at an earlier date.

It was only in the midst of writing my memoirs that your articles regarding the whereabouts of "Peter the Painter" came to my knowledge. I have every reason and belief, however, for saying that this much discussed personage fled to Australia, and later to America, where he died as stated in my letter.

Yours obediently,

B. LEESON.

CHAPTER XVI

TRACING A MURDERER

Stinie Morrison and the Clapham murder—Was he guilty?—The letter "S" and its alleged connection with the Houndsditch affair—The three brothers—The restaurant in Osborne Street—The Australian—The arrest—Trial and sentence of death—Reprieve—Morrison's death in prison.

THE Sidney Street affair and the bullet that "laid me out" there probably robbed me of the pleasure of arresting Stinie Morrison, one of the most notorious of the Whitechapel murderers.

Stinie Morrison was charged, convicted, and sentenced to death for the murder of Leon Beron, an old eccentric Jew, but he was not hanged. The conviction and sentence was followed by a wave of public doubt as to his guilt, and there were many who maintained, and indeed maintain to this day, that the prosecution failed to prove its case, based as it was almost entirely on circumstantial evidence.

Let me say at once that I am not one of the doubters. In my opinion Morrison was as guilty as any man who has occupied the condemned cell. This conviction of mine is based on my knowledge of the man, and on my inquiries in connection with the case.

Leon Beron was one of three brothers living in a mean apartment over a small fruiterer's shop in Jubilee Street, Whitechapel, the lives of all three being enshrouded in a good deal of mystery. Although Leon and his brothers were reputed to be wealthy, as a matter of fact they were not. They had a little property in the East End which brought them in a small income.

At about eight o'clock on the morning of January 1st, 1911, a police constable patrolling Clapham Common came upon the dead body of an elderly man. There could be only one explanation of the man's death, and that was

murder. The body was partially hidden in some bushes and bore evidence of extreme violence. A severe wound at the crest of the forehead on the right-hand side, and which obviously had been inflicted by some heavy blunt instrument, was the cause of death. There were other injuries of a minor character. The dead man's face had been furrowed by a knife or some other sharp weapon, the wounds thus made forming an indefinite letter "S."

Counsel who defended Morrison at his trial used this problematical "S" for all he was worth. He tried to convince the jury that this facial mark clearly indicated that Beron had been the victim of a secret society; it was, he maintained, a crime of revenge, and the murderers had branded their victim as a spy. One of the theories was that Beron had been in some way mixed up with the Houndsditch shooting affair, and had been killed because he had betrayed his former associates.

All this talk about the peculiar mark on Beron's face left me unmoved—I never attached the slightest importance to it. My view was, and I have never had any cause to alter my opinion, that the "S" shape wound was the result of accident and as a possible clue had no value at all. Had the Houndsditch affair not happened a few days previously, I don't think for one moment that this "S" on the murdered man's face would have played anything like the part it did in the case of Stinie Morrison.

Clapham Common is a long way from Whitechapel and it may at first seem strange that I came into the case at all; but the explanation is quite simple. Leon Beron was unmistakably a foreign Jew and that fact suggested Whitechapel. The first step in a murder case is to identify the victim, and so the officers in charge of the investigation on the spot made their way to Whitechapel to seek the assistance of "H" division. Within a few hours of the discovery of the crime, Inspector Ward (afterwards killed in a Zeppelin raid), Sergeant Cooper (later a superintendent at Scotland Yard), and Sergeant Hawkins arrived at Leman Street Station. They brought with them the few articles found on the dead man. The only article that seemed to have any value as a potential clue was a grimy scrap of paper on which two words had been crudely pencilled.

The words appeared to be "boots" and "coke."

My Chief at Leman Street at that time was Divisional Detective-Inspector Wensley, afterwards Chief Constable of Scotland Yard. He showed me the paper and gave me the job of identifying the dead man.

"Not much to go on," I remember him saying in his characteristic way, "but it ought to be enough. I shan't expect you back till the job's done."

To anyone not knowing the Whitechapel district well the paper would have proved a very slender clue indeed; to me, however, it did suggest something. My years in the district had made me familiar with all the little streets just off the Commercial Road and I remembered that one of these streets was Coke Street, a little thoroughfare of a dozen houses or so, the inhabitants of which were all foreigners.

Was the reference on the scrap of paper to Coke Street? This was the question I asked myself as I set out with Sergeant Boreham to begin my investigations. A reasonable, or at all events a possible deduction seemed to be that the piece of paper had been given as a receipt for a pair of boots left at a shop in Coke Street for repairs. Thus it was that within ten minutes Sergeant Boreham and I found ourselves in the stuffy back room of a Russian Jew who carried on a small boot repairing business in the street in question. The owner of the shop spoke no English, but fortunately I had picked up a little Yiddish and was able to carry on a conversation of sorts. I produced the piece of paper, opened it out, and thrust it in front of the eyes of the old man.

"Know anything about that?" I asked him in Yiddish.

The old man took the paper and examined it carefully and, as I thought, a little suspiciously.

"Yes," he said, "I gave this paper to a customer of mine as a receipt for a pair of boots. I've still got the boots. He hasn't called for them yet. They are ready—do you want them?"

"No thanks," I replied, "what I want is the name and address of the man who left them."

The boot repairer thought for a minute and then shook his head.

"They just brought the boots and were to call for them when they were ready."

"But don't you remember this man?" I persisted.

"Didn't he give you his name at all? Try and think—it is most important.

The old man put on his thinking cap whilst Boreham and I waited impatiently.

"I can't be sure," he said, shaking his head again, "I think he told me his name—something like Peron or Deron I think it was. Beron! Yes, that's what it was—Beron, and I think he mentioned that he lived in Black Lion Yard."

Here was a great slice of luck; we had definitely identified the paper as having been given to a man named Beron living in Black Lion Yard. All we had to do now, we thought, was to go to the address given and establish that the man Beron was missing. But it was not to be as easy as all that.

Black Lion Yard, a very notorious street in those days, boasted of roughly twenty houses. About sixteen of them were known to be inhabited by receivers. At one time and another we had had a lot of trouble with the residents in this mean thoroughfare. As soon as Boreham and I reached the place we got our first setback, for Beron no longer lived there. No one seemed to know where he had gone, but one woman said she had heard that he lived with his brothers over a fruit shop in Mile End Road.

I was less confident now that we were on the right track, since if the murdered man had lived with his brothers it seemed remarkable that they had not by this time come forward to say he had disappeared. Still it was the only clue we had and had to be investigated, though to find one particular fruit shop in Mile End Road, one of the longest streets in London, was a tremendous job. We tackled it systematically, starting at one end and working through to the other, and never before did I know there were so many fruit shops in the district. The afternoon wore on and dusk was falling and still we were without a single clue to the whereabouts of the shop we were seeking.

Then our luck changed. We had not only been making inquiries in the Mile End Road, but in the adjoining streets as well. Thus it was that we called late in the evening at a small general store and fruit shop in Sidney Street where we got the information for which we had been searching for hours.

Strange in view of what happened afterwards that we should have been successful in Sidney Street!

Less than forty-eight hours after, and within a few yards of the shop that yielded me this minor triumph, an anarchist's bullet was to put an end to my career in the police force and almost to my life.

The information we got at this little Sidney Street shop was that there were three eccentric brothers living over a fruit shop in Jubilee Street, which runs parallel with Sidney Street. We made for the place and though by this time it was very late the shop was still open. The proprietor told me that three men, Leon, Solomon, and David Beron occupied the rooms over his shop, but at the moment they were not at home. It was now merely a question of waiting till they turned up.

I got on the phone to Wensley at Arbour Square Police Station, and told him how far our inquiry had succeeded; he was very pleased, and as I expected, told me to carry on.

With Boreham I returned to the fruit shop, and, determined to wait all night if necessary, made our way to the rooms above. Hour after hour passed; midnight—one o'clock, two o'clock, and still no sign of the brothers. At last we heard the front door open, the sound of voices, and footsteps on the rickety stairs. Two men had come in and were coming in the direction of the room in which we were concealed! The door opened and they entered.

For the time being we remained silent, listening to their conversation and hoping that we might hear something of value. We learned nothing, however, and so jumped suddenly from our hiding-place. The effect—or rather the lack of it—on the two men was amazing to us. They showed no surprise, their faces, upon which we flashed our torches, remaining quite expressionless.

I told them that we were police officers making inquiries about a man believed to be their brother, and asked them if they could help us. They agreed that they had a brother Leon, but had no idea where he was—they had not seen him since the morning before. Then I announced that the police had reason to believe that Leon had been murdered at Clapham Common.

The three brothers had lived together, and the murdered man had shared intimately the lives of the other two; in

fact, from what I had been told, the three were regarded as inseparables. In view of this, and having regard to the fact that Leon had been missing since the morning of the previous day, Boreham and I decided, after a brief consultation, that the circumstances justified our asking the two brothers to accompany us to the station.

On the way they became more communicative, and as we came to Osborne Street, in the Whitechapel Road, Solomon, pointing to it, said, "We often have our meals up there with Leon; he would have been there now if they are open."

The place indicated was a restaurant, which later played a big part in the Stinie Morrison case, and we noted that it was an ordinary refreshment house frequented mainly by foreign Jews.

We left Solomon and David at Leman Street Station. Their first duty, that of identifying the dead man, did not concern me, but would be attended to by Inspector Ward and his officers. I set out once more on the trail, and the first call I made was at the restaurant in Osborne Street. Here I struck the clue which led to the arrest of Stinie Morrison.

The proprietor of the restaurant, a man I knew quite well, was very willing to help, but apart from the fact that Leon Beron often dined in the place, he knew nothing about him. Several customers were in the restaurant, and immediately gathered round. I didn't mind that, for there was always the chance that they might be able to give me some information, and so it fell out, for a woman—one of the most voluble of those present—gave me a minute and, as it turned out afterwards, a very accurate description of Beron. I asked about the company Beron kept—who, for instance, had been with him when he was last there. The woman supplied the answer to this, too, and in so doing drove the thin end of the wedge into the freedom of Stinie Morrison.

"The last time I saw him," she said, "—the night before last I think it was—he was with a tall man who wore a coat like yours, except that his had a belt and yours hasn't."

"I know the man you mean," exclaimed another excitedly; "it's the Australian," and the others agreed.

Immediately the word "Australian" was spoken I

knew I had dropped on something big. To me it had the utmost significance, but I kept my thoughts to myself, and leaving the restaurant I rang through to Leman Street Police Station. The most important piece of information I got as a result of that call was that Solomon and David Beron had definitely identified the dead man as their brother. I had been convinced of it, but official confirmation was necessary before I could proceed far with my inquiries.

Now for the "Australian." I knew a lot more about this powerfully built, handsome man than did any of the people in the restaurant. His real name was Morris Stein and he was a ticket-of-leave man. Although he lived in the Lavender Hill district, and should have been reporting to the police station there, he was more often than not to be found in the East End.

Curiously enough I had spoken to Stein only a few days before. Gambling house frequenters had told me that he was in possession of £200 to £300 in Bank of England notes. Knowing the "Australian" as I did, I strongly suspected that he had not come by this sum of money honestly. My information was correct, for at his trial it was stated that the money in his possession was the proceeds of a bank robbery.

I learned nothing from Stein at that time, but I particularly noticed the clothes he wore.

During the conversation I asked him why he was called the "Australian." He replied, "It's only swank. I'm supposed to come from Australia, but you know different."

I took a statement in writing from the woman in the restaurant, and then persuaded her to go to Leman Street Station, where she was handed over to Inspector Ward and Inspector Wensley.

I continued with the inquiry, getting other statements confirming hers, designed to show that Morris Stein was without question the man who was last seen in the company of Leon Beron.

I was completely satisfied in my own mind, so much so that I went back and saw Wensley in his own room. "There's no question about it," I told him, "Morris Stein is the man we have got to check up."

I went into another room and brought out the convict register. This has a complete record of the men on licence,

and is kept at every police station in the Metropolitan area. I looked up Stein's record, and showing it to Wensley he agreed that the description there tallied in every way with that given by people from whom statements had been taken.

Morris Stein had to be found. More than that, he had, if possible, to be got under lock and key. The man himself simplified matters for us. We discovered that though the address he had given to the police was in Lavender Hill, he was, in fact, living in Newark Street, Whitechapel. This was sufficient to justify the man's immediate arrest, and the following notice was sent to all police stations:

WANTED FOR PETTY OFFENCES

C.L. (C.S.O.) Licence-holder Morris Stein, Office No. 141,701, for failing to reside at his registered address. Caution—carries firearms, and may attempt to use them.

This is where I faded out of the case. Sidney Street was the cause of that, and I was lying in a bed at the London Hospital with a bullet through my lungs when I heard of Stinie Morrison's arrest.

By the time the trial came on at the Old Bailey I was convalescent, and though I no longer had any official connection with the case I went to the trial.

From where I was sitting I had an excellent view of the man in the dock, and soon after the case had started Stinie's eyes met mine. Into his there came a puzzled look, as though he was saying to himself, "Whatever is that fellow doing here?"

It was only in court that I heard for the first time the full extent of the Crown's case against Stinie Morrison. I had worked only on the Whitechapel end of the investigations, where the police task was to definitely link up the "Australian" with the mysterious Leon Beron.

The statements I had obtained had made it quite clear that for some reason or other Morrison (as he was called throughout the trial) had been "nursing" old man Beron. A lot of smart detective work had been done at the Clapham Common end, and the complete chain of evidence was such that, as the case proceeded, I became more convinced than ever that they had got the right man.

At the time of Stinie Morrison's arrest the police case

against him was nothing like complete. It was one thing to prove that Morrison had been in the company of Beron up to a short time before the murder, but quite another to prove that he had struck the fatal blows.

A study of the convict register showed that Morrison's address was at Lavender Hill, Clapham Junction, and the murder had taken place on Clapham Common, less than a mile away from the shop at which Morrison had been working as an assistant baker. Was this merely coincidence? A lot of time was spent in tracing Morrison's movements from the time he had ceased work at Lavender Hill, and he was found to have been a rover.

For a period he had lived in Grove Street, Whitechapel, the same street, by the way, in which "Peter the Painter" had made his modest home. He was then associated with a girl at Newark Street, and later still at York Road and James Street.

The restaurant in Osborne Street, to which my attention had first been directed by Solomon and David Beron, the dead man's brothers, provided yet another clue.

A waiter came forward to say that just before he left the restaurant in the company of Leon Beron on the night of December 31st, Morrison had collected a parcel he had previously left in the waiter's care. The parcel was long and heavy, and the waiter stated that it looked as if there was a bar of iron in it.

The premises at York Road, one of Morrison's latest haunts, also yielded something significant. In his search there, Inspector Ward found a cloakroom ticket hidden in the lining of a bowler hat. The ticket related to a parcel which had been left a short time before at St. Mary's Railway Station, Whitechapel. The parcel was recovered, and its contents were found to be a revolver and a box of cartridges.

Nor was that all. A railway clerk definitely identified Morrison as the man who had deposited the parcel, though for the purpose he had used a fictitious name. More important still, the parcel had been deposited at the station a few hours after Leon Beron had been struck down at Clapham Common. Why should Morrison have been so anxious to get rid of his tell-tale weapon so quickly after the murder if he himself was innocent? Coincidence? Perhaps, but equally like the action of a guilty man.

The strangest evidence of all was unearthed after Morrison was under lock and key.

This was supplied by an East End cab driver. His story was that at two o'clock on the morning of New Year's Day he had picked up two men in the Mile End Road. The address to which he drove them was in Lavender Hill. The hansom cab driver described his early morning fares. The one tallied completely with Leon Beron and the other he definitely identified as Stinie Morrison. This man's evidence was a big step forward.

A second hansom cab driver provided an equally strong link in the chain. In his evidence at the Old Bailey he identified the man in the dock as the fare he had picked up at Clapham at half-past three and driven to Kennington. This was just half an hour after the crime was estimated by the doctors to have taken place.

The motive for the crime as suggested by the prosecution was robbery. Beron, as I have said, had the reputation in the Whitechapel district of being a wealthy man, and my own view is that Morrison induced him to go with him that night on some excuse or another.

The crime of murder may not have been premeditated, but that of robbery probably was. My own theory is that the route taken by Morrison after leaving the cab led across Clapham Common, where reaching a quiet spot he turned on his companion, striking him down and relieving him of every article of value in his possession. Morrison then walked to the other side of the common, and took a cab to Kennington, hoping and believing that he had covered his tracks. This is my reading of the crime.

The late Mr. Edward Abinger put up the fight of his life in Stinie Morrison's defence, and I don't think for a moment that there is any doubt that he was convinced of Morrison's innocence.

I am not going to deal with the trial at any great length. The defence was an alibi. The association of Beron and Morrison before the crime was freely admitted, but evidence was produced to show that when the man in the dock was alleged by the prosecution to have been in Beron's company at Clapham, he was in bed at his lodgings in Newark Street.

It was a trial of sensations. One came on the eighth day when, during Mr. Abinger's final address to the jury, one of the brothers of the murdered man—I forget whether it

was Solomon or David—rushed at Counsel in a frenzy of fury, shaking his fists and calling on him to stop.

The trial ended on the ninth day. The jury took just thirty-five minutes to decide that Stinie Morrison had committed the crime. Immediately there was another sensation. Part of the prosecution's case had been the amount of money known to have been possessed by Morrison at the time of his arrest—matter of over twenty pounds.

Morrison, in the witness-box, had explained how this money had come into his possession, but faced with sentence of death, he retracted this part of his story, saying that he could prove that in November he had the sum of £300. Mr. Abinger supplemented the statement by explaining that this sum was the proceeds of a bank robbery. The fact had not been mentioned before, in order to save Morrison from being tried on that charge, following the acquittal which had been confidently expected.

Stinie Morrison was not hanged. Mr. Abinger continued his fight for his client's life, and being successful in getting a reprieve.

Condemned then to a life sentence, Morrison became a most unruly prisoner, eventually dying in Parkhurst prison.

Before passing from this great trial with its sensations and thrills I should like to reiterate that there is no doubt in my mind with regard to Stinie Morrison's guilt. The possibilities of a second person having been concerned in the crime have never been discarded, however, and some day I may throw a little light on that mystery.

CHAPTER XVII

A CLEVER SCOUNDREL

The original "cat" burglar—Bessie—The missing button—How I found a "bull's eye"—Tracking the cat man—Arrest and trial—Acquittal—An amazing sequel—Bessie's story—Goldenberg gets his deserts

DURING recent years many stories, true and otherwise, have been told about the so-called "cat" burglar, but I doubt if any of them has provided a nearer approach to a "cat-man" than the hero, or, if you like, the villain, of this story.

A Russian Jew, Mark Goldenberg was the name of this erstwhile burglar, and many true stories, some so fantastic as to be unbelievable, could be told about this man. Before I attempt to describe his adventures I must tell you that in all his crimes he had an accomplice—a woman—though no one, not even the police, was aware of this fact even up to the time of his arrest.

Bessie was the woman's name, and little was known of her except that she got her living by diessmaking. A fine, well-built brunette, with a wonderful growth of hair, the distinctive nature of her clothes caused a certain amount of attraction in the district where she lived, though strangely enough no one knew where she actually did live.

She would call on people of reasonable means, and induce them to employ her as a needlewoman, and as she invariably gave complete satisfaction she received many recommendations to other houses. Bessie was noticeably fond of animals, particularly dogs, and strangely enough usually found employment in houses where there were dogs, with whom she would make friends.

Nobody ever seems to have inquired into Bessie's history, and notwithstanding the many burglaries that took place in houses where she was employed, she always appears to have been overlooked by the police, as it was not until

after the arrest of Goldenberg that the police were even interested in her existence.

And now for the villain of the piece. Wrong 'un as he undoubtedly was, Goldenberg was a fine-looking man, handsome and well-built and at all times immaculately dressed. He had many times been brought to my notice chiefly because of his behaviour in gambling dens, where he won and lost large sums of money—principally the latter, but I usually had something more important to do than to devote much time to that sort of thing, though like the renowned Ko-Ko in *The Mikado*, I'd "got him on the list." He eventually took his turn on the list, but he had a long run before I brought him to book.

Many burglaries had been traced to his door—but no farther, and the amazing part of the whole thing is that when he was finally caught and faced with every possible bit of essential evidence he cleverly cheated the jury and all the police officers concerned (myself included), though he did not deceive the learned Judge who tried him ; but I anticipate.

Round about this period (1900) we had more than our usual share of burglaries, but in the majority of cases we were able to deal satisfactorily with them. There were, however, instances in which we received reports of burglaries that took place under conditions that were almost unbelievable, property of considerable value being stolen and removed in an apparently almost impossible way.

In one case the thief was alleged to have poisoned a valuable terrier and then entering a second floor front room removed a bunch of keys from under the occupant's pillow, with which he opened a safe and stole money and jewellery, afterwards leaving without either being seen or heard.

Quickly following on this there was a similar case, though this time he appeared to have drugged a splendid Great Dane, afterwards pushing it into an area, where it was found suspended by its collar and chain to the railings and where it had hung till it choked. "Drugged" is the only explanation I can give, since no person would have placed the dog in that position in the ordinary way—in fact, it was not very approachable even in normal circumstances.

In this case, too, the safe had been opened, this time

with a bunch of keys taken from the trousers pocket of the owner, the bunch including two patent keys and a police whistle, all of which disappeared, but which eventually played an important part in the trial of the thief.

We were now forced to believe that there was some foundation for these reports, yet not the faintest trace of forcible entry could we find at any of these houses nor did it appear possible for anyone to have left without some sign usually associated with burglary. How and by whom these crimes were committed was something to effectively test my ability and detective knowledge.

As far as I could see the only method of entry that could have been used was by dropping from the roof and getting into the house via a window, but if this were the case I first had to find out how he managed to get on the roof, a seemingly impossible feat.

Paying a further visit to the scene of the latest crime I noticed a gutter pipe which ran right up the wall of a house close by to the actual premises that had been burgled, and it was from the former that I conducted my inquiries in an endeavour to reconstruct the crime, reaching the burgled house by means of planks.

These, of course, could not have been used by the thief, and if he had reached his objective by the route I had used he must have climbed the gutter pipe, then gone hand over hand along the guttering of three houses and finally let himself down by another short pipe to the ledge below a window, where presumably entry was effected, eventually returning the same way. This, by the way, at a great height and over spiked railings which in the event of a fall must have proved fatal.

All this was extremely interesting, and I hoped to be rewarded with the arrest of something more than the ordinary burglar and the recovery of a quantity of stolen property.

Carefully examining the ledge below the window, I found not the finger or the footprints that I was looking for, but a very pretty button common enough in those days of a black and white design popularly known as "bull's-eye," and usually worn on fancy vests. It was evident that the button had only come there by chance, and I was now convinced that the premises had been entered from this point, and that the button belonged to the person making

the entry. Moreover, I felt sure that the place from which the culprit was working was somewhere in the vicinity.

At all events I had a clue for which we had long been waiting in similar cases. I say "similar," though in some of the reports that had reached us of burglaries being committed with no sign of entry it had even been alleged that the thief had crawled under a bed and removed a *safe* without attracting the attention of people sleeping in the room.

With other officers I made discreet inquiries at local tailors and eventually found one who had fitted a customer with a waistcoat which had buttons identical with the one I had found.

The tailor did not know his customer's name or address, at least he said he didn't, but was expecting him to call for a pair of trousers which had been left for repair and which the tailor allowed us to see. This, together with other little scraps of evidence, made it worth our while to keep this little shop under observation.

We hadn't long to wait, and fortunately I was on the spot when a man whom I had some reason to suspect arrived. We had arranged for a signal from the tailor, but left nothing to chance, and this was just as well, for without any signal from inside we saw the man leave with a pair of trousers over his arm, the very trousers which the tailor had shown us.

The man appeared not in the least concerned and walked into the Whitechapel Road closely shadowed by myself and another officer, for I was determined at least to find out who he was and what was known about him.

The trail was not a long one, for turning out of the main road he made for a street running parallel to it and there he abruptly entered a house. You can imagine how bucked I felt when I say that the street was the one in which the crime I was investigating had been committed, and the house the man had entered a few doors away from the burgled premises and on the same side.

Reaching the door, we found it open, and without any concern for the consequences of our intrusion entered, and following close on our man saw him enter a room on the first floor, the door of which, to our surprise, was also open. As a matter of fact it wasn't so very surprising, for clever though we believed ourselves to be, the man was

fully aware of our every movement and was planning how best to frustrate us.

His intention was to make an exit through the window, but we were so close on his heels that he hadn't time to carry out his plan and so, throwing the trousers into a corner of the room, he faced us with the query:

"What are you following me about for?"

My heart gave a thump, for as he turned to us I noticed that on his smart fancy vest there was a button missing—the black and white button popularly known as "bull's-eye!" Moreover, the window by which he was trying to escape was the one I had fixed in my mind as the starting-point of the crime, and which he now showed clearly was a means of egress with which he was familiar.

I remained silent, hoping he might say something that would incriminate him, but not a word did he utter even when on searching the room we came upon the missing bunch of keys with police whistle attached. His silence was going to make things very difficult as we had little evidence to go on, though when we took him to the station we were soon able to get the keys and whistle identified, and he was charged with being in unlawful possession.

On his appearance before the magistrate the next morning I gave evidence as to his possession of the keys and whistle, the waistcoat and the missing button which had been found and traced and a detailed description of the theories I had formed of his method of entry.

Through it all he stood absolutely motionless and making no comment. He had engaged no legal assistance, though obviously in a position to do so, and at the close of the evidence merely said that he elected to go for trial.

He hadn't very long to wait for this and within a fortnight he appeared at the North London Sessions, at that time under the able chairmanship of Mr. Loveland Loveland. Again the prisoner remained absolutely silent and again he was not legally represented and, as before, put no questions either to me or any other witness, which, considering the nature and completeness of my evidence, was rather extraordinary.

Since there were no counsel present to fence over matters of law and give a display of legal fireworks, it was left to the Judge to put the case to the jury, which he did, touching briefly but decisively on such important matters as the keys, the whistle and, last but not least, the missing button.

And here Mark Goldenberg found his tongue.

With a gesture almost dramatic he suddenly sprang to his feet and shouted:

"I want to give evidence for myself."

It was just about this period that this privilege had been given prisoners, and the Judge immediately granted Goldenberg his request.

Leaving the dock and sauntering across the court, he jauntily entered the witness-box, and before anybody could stop him, removed his coat and waistcoat. Holding the latter aloft, he said in a voice that thrilled the whole court:

"Look at this and then tell me what you think of your detectives," at the same time pointing to the spot from which I had declared the button to be missing, the button I claimed to have found.

"Remembering that I have been in custody ever since my arrest," he went on, "how can that button be anything to do with me when I still have the shank on here?"

It was just as if a bomb had fallen.

Asking to see both button and vest, the Judge, after examining them both, passed them on to the jury, and I was then sent back into the witness-box to make what explanation I could, and though I knew well enough that in some way the prisoner had outwitted us all, I signally failed to impress the twelve good men and true, and a moment later the foreman arose and announced a verdict of "Not Guilty."

"Do you find him not guilty of being in possession of the keys?" asked the Judge.

"Yes," came the amazing answer.

"And of the whistle?" said his Lordship.

"Yes," replied the foreman.

It was incredible.

Addressing the prisoner, who had now returned to the dock, the Judge said:

"Much against my will I discharge you, but in doing so I believe I am releasing one of the most cunning criminals I have ever had before me. I am satisfied as to your guilt, and commend the police for the manner in which they have placed this case before me, and now that they know you I do not doubt that before very long you will be before me again."

I was in complete agreement with the learned Judge, for never before in my whole career was I more satisfied as to a prisoner's guilt, and never to my mind had the evidence been more conclusive. Had I known then what I was soon to know, Goldenberg's conviction would have been a certainty.

So now for the amazing sequel.

I had to go away for some days and on my return was informed that a woman had called to see me. She would not state her business, insisting on seeing Sergeant Leeson. She was in my room now, I was told, and going there I found a fine, handsome-looking brunette, whom the reader will have guessed to be that Bessie of whom I spoke in the early part of this chapter. Immediately on seeing me she said:

"Yes, you're the one—I saw you in the court."

I racked my brains as to where I had seen her before, and in a flash I remembered.

Whilst making inquiries at the house where the Great Dane had been poisoned and where the burglary had been committed which led to the trial, this woman had sat in the kitchen during the whole of the search and investigations, but she had never opened her mouth and we had ignored her.

Giving her no inkling as to what was in my mind, I just said:

"Yes, I remember seeing you in court, but haven't I seen you anywhere else? Your face is very familiar."

"Yes," she replied, almost pathetically, "we've met more than once and I'm just going to tell you all about it."

What would we have given to have been in possession of her evidence before we let Goldenberg go!

She had been his accomplice in a series of crimes much longer even than we suspected. Sheet after sheet I took from her in the form of a statement, and if her story was true she had been responsible for the destruction of no less than seven valuable dogs while making the coast clear for Goldenberg's various burglaries.

On the night of the last one for which he was arrested, she told us how she had returned late to this particular house with a dress, how she had been invited to have supper and accepting the invitation had managed to dope the dog that was afterwards strangled; how she had re-

moved the keys from inside the doors before leaving, thus preventing the occupier from securing the doors when retiring; and how finally, through her keeping the keys after having been told not to do so, they had been found by me in Goldenberg's room.

"How I trembled in court when the evidence about the keys was given," she told me, and then paused as if unable to go on. Then, unable to restrain herself, she burst out.

"I took the piece of button to him in the prison when I went to see him, and he got the needle and cotton from the prison tailor's shop!"

This, then, was the woman we had overlooked.

Seeing the inevitable inquiry in my face, she continued:

"Yes, I know what you want to know—why do I tell you this now?"

That is just what I did want to know and the answer came as a shock.

"I loved him," she said, "I loved him dearly, but he tried to sell my body to a White Slave agent."

Goldenberg, doubtless guessing Bessie's intentions after his foul action, fled to Liverpool, but I am glad to say was arrested there at the woman's instigation for yet another beastly offence. He went to prison for a long term and was recommended for deportation, but like many others evaded that order.

CHAPTER XVIII

MURDER IN ROOM 13

The brothers Reubens—Blackmail which led to murder—The two sailors and the girl decoys—Room 13—Trial and collapse of the prisoners—Cowards to the end

TWO of the youngest murderers I ever had anything to do with were the brothers Reubens. Little more than boys, they were old in the way of crime, and for years had carried on a particularly despicable form of blackmail; but they tried it once too often.

Operating in the area of the London Docks, sailors coming off their ships after a long spell at sea were their usual victims, and using girls as decoys, these two youngsters got the "Jacks" in their power and proceeded to fleece them.

In cases such as this it is often said that the parents are to blame, but Marks and Morris Reubens did not have that excuse. Their father was an invalid, and the mother a homely old soul of the Jewish faith who did her best to make their mean house comfortable. The lads were wild and not amenable to any discipline, and making no attempt to work roamed the streets night and day, finding their companions amongst Whitechapel's worst undesirables. I knew them as pickpockets and thieves, cunning and wholly unscrupulous, but I did not suspect them of blackmail, and certainly did not think they would ever stoop to murder.

In March, 1909, a well-known steamer came up the Thames and berthed at the Lower Docks. Two of the members of the crew to come ashore were Sprowell, the ship's engineer, and a friend; together they made their way citywards.

After the discovery of the crime that ensued, it was my job to trace the movements of these two sailors, and I first picked up a clue at an Aldgate hotel, where with the

help of the manager I was able to discover that in addition to consuming a number of drinks the two men had regaled themselves with a meal of steak and tomatoes. Taking up the trail from this point, I was able to assist in placing before the court the complete evening's movements of the engineer and his friend.

After leaving the hotel, they retraced their steps to Whitechapel, and in High Street visited another public-house, where they not only drank freely, but purchased a quantity of whisky in a bottle.

The purchase of this whisky gave rise to a humorous incident during the police court proceedings. The bottle was produced in evidence, and after it was identified the magistrate said to the witness, "What was on the bottle?"—meaning, of course, the name. Notwithstanding the seriousness of the case, this was too much for a wit seated in the public part of the court, who flashed back the reply, "Twopence on that size!" This, following on a number of earlier interruptions, had the result of the court being cleared.

Early in the morning following his night out, the body of Sprowell was found by a night watchman in the doorway of a house in Rupert Street, Whitechapel. The dead man had been battered about the face and head, and had a knife wound over the heart, there being no doubt at all that it was a case of foul play. From the marks of his blood-stained fingers it would appear that Sprowell had staggered across the road, and finding himself sinking had clutched at the door and wall for support. He had then collapsed and died. Within a few minutes of the discovery a message arrived at the police station.

I arrived on the scene at three o'clock in the morning, and very soon I was making inquiries at No. 3, the house in which the Reubens brothers lived. When I reached the door of the room which they habitually used, I found that its number was 13!

The brothers were no strangers to me, and as soon as I saw them on this occasion I made up my mind that the hunt was over. But proof had to be obtained and a lot of work remained to be done.

Bit by bit the full unhappy story was pieced together. Either inside or close to the public-house in High Street, Whitechapel, Sprowell and his companion, both by this

time slightly intoxicated, had met two young and good-looking women. The merry sailors and the girls had talked for a time, and then the quartette, proceeding together to No. 3 Rupert Street, made their way to the fateful room No. 13. They were not seen in the dark deserted street, but we got the story afterwards from Sprowell's friend. As to what happened in the room itself there was a big conflict of evidence, and naturally the two brothers and the engineer's friend were not agreed on the point.

The story is a very simple one. After a good deal of drinking and merriment, the friend expressed a wish to go. The reason for this is not clear, and he was never certain on the point himself. He was either too drunk to have any clear recollection of it afterwards, or he had been drugged. The latter was more than a possibility, for drugging was a pretty common form of amusement in those days, and men like Marks and Morris Reubens just the type to practise it.

Anyhow, Sprowell's friend did not leave—not then, at all events. He was just about to make his way out of the room, when the brothers made their first appearance on the scene. They hadn't been far away at any time, and doubtless it was the man's decision to go that prompted them to action. Before the sailor could gather up his belongings there came a knock on the shutters. One of the girls went to the door and returned to the room followed by the two brothers, who professed themselves highly indignant at what they found there.

"What are you doing with my wife?" demanded one of them. "What is the meaning of it? I demand an apology."

The sailors were taken by surprise, as this was the last thing they expected, but they were men of the world, and had heard of blackmail and such tricks, and believing the whole thing to be a put-up job ordered the brothers from the room. The stage was now set for a first-class scrap. The Reubens had expected to find the men cowed and frightened, but their plan miscarried, for instead of this they were showing fight. In addition the sailors were men of powerful physique, against whom the brothers would be no match in fair fight.

One of the latter was armed with a sort of walking stick, and with this he started operations. Sprowell's

friend was soon beaten into a state of exhaustion and helplessness, and Sprowell himself was left to fight the battle alone, which he did right manfully. I saw his body afterwards. He was strongly built and deep-chested, a very rough handful indeed in a hand-to-hand fight, and despite the stick and the odds of two to one he more than held his own. Once he had both the brothers down. They appeared to have fought well, but soon realised they were no match for the fighting sailor.

Then happened the thing that brought them both to the gallows. One of them, it was never really discovered which, resorted to the knife. It was just an ordinary clasp knife that one could carry in the waistcoat pocket. He must have struck with tremendous force, for the blade of the knife penetrated deep into Sprowell's chest in the region of the heart. Still the sailor would not give in, and mortally wounded as he was, with the blood gushing from his chest, he fought gallantly on, and but for exhaustion from loss of blood would still have beaten his assailants.

Blind, and nearing death, the injured man struggled out of the room, his object doubtless being to make his way down to the street, and go back the way he had come. Instead, he staggered across the road, and reaching the opposite wall collapsed and died.

And now came the most diabolical feature of the crime, for, unknown to his brother, Marks stole out of the house and, crossing the road to where his victim was lying, went through his pockets! The extent of his haul will never be known, but it was discovered later that among the things taken from the dead man's body were his watch and chain.

While the brothers were waiting at the station, and after they had been searched, I noticed a suspicious movement on the part of Marks, and had him searched a second time, and the watch and chain belonging to poor Sprowell were found inside his pants.

When he saw the watch Morris's face was a study. With a look of utter scorn he turned savagely on his brother and exclaimed, "You dirty thief!" He was upset, not, of course, because his brother had stolen the watch, but because he had kept the fact to himself.

Sprowell's companion was fortunate to have escaped with his life on that fatal night. Terribly marked about the face and hands, he seems to have walked out of the

house before the end. Dazed and bewildered, and quite unconscious of the fate that had befallen his companion, he wandered aimlessly about until he was spotted by a constable, who brought him along to the station.

One of the things that went heavily against the accused at the trial was the use of the clasp knife, since it showed premeditation. In extreme passion a dagger or a stiletto may be used without much thought, but the clasp knife had to be deliberately opened before it could be used. This as much as anything sealed their fate.

We had no difficulty in fastening the crime on the two brothers. There was no spectacular man-hunt, for they remained in the house and made no attempt to escape. The finding of the knife gave us more trouble than anything else. In order to prove conclusively that a knife or some such weapon had been used, it was necessary to produce it, and I must plead guilty to being one of the unsuccessful ones in the search. I spent several days on it, too, searching drains, roofs, floors, and even street sewers. The brothers naturally wouldn't help us, no doubt hoping that it would never be found; but it *was* found eventually—not, as I have said, by me—and in the most unlikely of places.

It had been hidden behind a sheet of iron, which, securely fastened to the kitchen wall, was used to protect the fire-stove. How anybody managed to put it there is still a mystery to me. It must first have been necessary to move the whole stove and plate—a tremendous job—and for my part I would just as soon have had the job of removing the roof.

The knife was damaged, the blade being doubled back almost at right angles. It was suggested at the trial that this had been caused by the force of the blow, but my own idea was that an attempt had been made to wrench the blade from the handle with the object of getting rid of it, as one without the other would have been useless as evidence.

The defence at the Central Criminal Court was that the brothers had acted in self-defence, the sailors, it was contended, being the aggressors. Morris denied all knowledge of the knife or its use, and it may be that it was Marks who actually struck the fatal blow. The jury were satisfied, however, that the two were concerned together in the

commission of a felony, and that both were equally guilty. This, of course, is as it should be, and is in accordance with the law.

Having been convicted of a cowardly crime, the prisoners again behaved like cowards when the fateful moment of the trial came.

When the jury filed back after a comparatively short absence, the brothers seemed to know the fate in store for them and a look of despair settled on their faces. Warders had to assist them up the steps of the dock.

"Guilty," pronounced the foreman in a breathless court, and sentence of death was passed on both. Swaying from side to side, first one and then the other collapsed and had to be carried below.

One cannot help feeling that in this case one of the two prisoners was probably more guilty than the other. When two persons conspire together to commit a crime or a crime results from their scheming, one of the two is generally the leading spirit. I have no doubt that it was so in this case, and had there been a redeeming feature in the past of either of them the result of the trial might have been different. But there was not—each had shown himself to be unscrupulous and callous to a degree, and they deserved their fate.

There was no reprieve and they went to the gallows.

CHAPTER XIX

CRIMINAL CHARACTERS

Characters I have known and met—The "purse bouncers"—"Sharpster" and "Big Frank"—"Bouncing the copper"—The "Toss"—"Slippery Sam" and "Country Bill"—A lucky "Jimmy"—How it was done.

I PROPOSE to devote this chapter to some peculiar characters I have met. I do not think any of them survive and in most cases the unlawful "professions" they followed have perished with them. The "purse bouncer," the "toss" man, the sleight-of-hand expert are now almost things of the past, though they are occasionally to be found on race-courses and railway trains.

These men never resorted to any violence in the pursuit of their callings and their practices could hardly be called crimes; in fact, they were often the occasion of much amusement and fun, and I am sure that none of them ever made more than a bare living. When action was taken against them, magistrates were always very loth to convict and invariably let them off with a fine of a few shillings.

The oldest of the little crowd of wrong 'uns who form the subject of this chapter was a man known as "Sharpster"—no one knew his real name—and he earned his nickname because of his extreme cleverness with the "purse" trick, at which he could "sharp" anyone. Then there was "Big Frank," so called because of his almost Herculean proportions, and "Stoney," so named because whenever he saw you he said, "I'm stony broke"; and last though anything but least, a man whose real name was Jack Foster, but who was almost universally known as "Slippery Sam."

Most of these men were clever at the "three-card trick," but as all of you know this old swindle and doubtless in some cases have been "caught" at that most

elusive business of "finding the lady," I am not going to describe it here.

The "purse" trick, however, is not so well known and I may say—*en passant*—that I became so adept at this trick that I was nearly as good at it as the "professors," in fact I made it my business to know something about all the games played by the gamblers of the underworld—Faro, chemin de fer, "francy foose," "clobby hoss," "peecy pacy," etc.—and why not? for how can a detective go into the witness-box and honestly describe a game he has seen played when he knows nothing whatever about it.

For the "purse" trick a medium-sized old-fashioned purse without a division and with a snap fastening was used. This was held wide open in the left hand and three coins—half-crowns or shillings, according to the class of the "audience"—were held between thumb and forefinger of the right hand and were slowly and ostentatiously dropped into the purse. They actually *were* dropped in and the trickster—to show his good faith—walked round the crowd repeatedly taking the coins out of the purse and dropping them in again.

Having fixed on a likely "mug," he would shut the purse and say:

"Now then try your luck, go on, take the purse in your hand and feel for yourself that the three coins are there. They are? Well, will you give me a half-crown—or a shilling, as the case might be—for the purse and its contents? Of course you will," and before you knew where you were you were fumbling in your pocket for your half a crown.

"Just let me show the others how I've been caught," and snatching the purse from you, the trickster would again go through the business of taking the coins out and putting them back again and then hand the purse back to you in exchange for your half-crown.

"Done me, you have," the "bouncer" would whisper to his victim, "but don't let the crowd know," and cleverly taking him by the arm would ask him to have another go, and more often than not the "dupe," certain that he had got three half-crowns (plus a purse) for one, would fall for it a second time.

What actually happened was that while you were

getting your half-crown out and the "purse bouncer" was showing the crowd for the last time how fair it all was, he would drop the coins *under* the purse into his hand and at the same time drop three pennies which he had palmed into the purse and quickly close it.

"Only fools would fall for a thing like that," do I hear you say? You'd be surprised!

One Sunday morning in Petticoat Lane (if you haven't been there, by the way, it's well worth a visit and you *won't* get your pocket picked as you may have been told), I saw "Sharpster" sell five purses in quick succession for a shilling each to one man—a soldier, and when after the fifth time the man wanted to go, saying he had only tenpence left, "Sharpster" said, "Never mind, have another one for that and don't forget to bring me the twopence you owe me next Sunday."

The soldier walked away elated, convinced that he had got six purses each containing three shillings for 5s. 10d. As he quickly opened them when he had got a little way off he found that each purse contained three halfpennies!

The funniest and certainly the most impudent working of this trick that I ever saw was at Braintree Fair some years ago. I was on holiday and went to the fair with some friends, where I found all three "purse bouncers" right in the centre of a tremendous crowd. Pushing my way through I was immediately spotted by "Big Frank." Shouting so as to attract the crowd, he said:

"Here's a gentleman who follows me wherever I go—I know he'll have one," at the same time holding out a purse to me.

I had my half-crown ready and making sure that the three proper coins were in the purse I gave him mine, and quickly seizing the purse, put it in my pocket before he could do his usual shuffle.

Frank knew he'd been caught at his own game, but he never turned a hair, nor did he show the least resentment.

At that moment two hefty-looking inspectors came into the crowd and "Big Frank," immediately shouting "Two more of my regular patrons," pushed a purse on to them. Confident that Frank wouldn't try his games on them, one of them handed up his half-crown, and smilingly the two of them made a bee-line for the bar, intending, as I

heard them say, to have a drink at the expense of the "purse bouncer." I followed to see the fun. Inside the bar tent they quickly opened the purse and took out—three pennies!

They were thoroughly mad about it and there looked like being trouble; when "Sharpster" walked in.

"What's wrong, gentlemen?" he asked.

"Wrong!" said the inspector, "you know jolly well what's wrong; you're with Frank and you ought to be charged. I'd do it, too, if it wasn't for showing myself up."

"Well, don't let us fall out, gentlemen," said "Sharpster," "I'll put things right; have one of mine," and quickly producing a purse and going through the business of placing three half-crowns in it, he handed it to the aggrieved policeman and with an apologetic air said:

"There, now don't let us have any more words about it; you'll find mine's right enough. Now give me your half-crown and I'll treat you with it." The policeman handed over his half-crown and was about to open the purse when "Sharpster" said:

"Don't you trust me?"

"Sorry," said the inspector as he put the purse in his pocket.

True to his word "Sharpster" treated them both, and expressing a hope that he might see them again at the next "meeting," disappeared. A man who was standing by watching and who evidently knew something, said:

"Bet you drinks he's 'caught' you, guv'nor."

"I won't bet," said the officer, "but I'll show you."

Out came the purse and out came the contents on the bar counter. Three pennies!

The inspector was speechless with rage and darted out of the tent, but "Sharpster" had gone and I can imagine him telling the boys at Aldgate that night how he had "bounced the copper."

The last time I saw "Sharpster" at his "profession" was at the Quarter Sessions. He had been arrested, and in some fit of obstinacy elected to be tried before a jury instead of—as he put it—before a lot of—old justices. "Sharpster," who had been out on bail, arrived early at the court.

The twelve "good men and true" were waiting in the main hall, and in a moment the trickster was amongst

them, and, with unbelievable audacity, was illustrating to them the fairness of his business. He actually sold seven purses to the jurymen before he was spotted by the officials and put into the street.

When his case was called he stepped into the dock and at once produced a purse and started to demonstrate the trick, much to the annoyance of the gaoler, who snatched the purse away from him. Nothing daunted, he began again with another, which he was successful in getting handed up to the Chairman.

Despite the evidence against him, the jury stopped the case and he was discharged!

And can one wonder? In each of those purses he had sold to the jurymen were three bright half-crowns!

Jack Hunter was as plausible a rogue at his job as you could meet in a day's march. His job was the "Toss," and he was sufficiently clever to have gained a good living at it for years. I call him a rogue, though it is safe to assume that he had never indulged in serious crime, for if he had, I should certainly have known about it.

I call him Jack Hunter, since it was his real name, though he was never known by it. He was known, as I have already mentioned, by the picturesque soubriquet of "Slippery Sam."

I don't know how he gained this title, but by it he was known far and wide. If Sam had ever committed any serious offence he was much too noticeable to have ever got away with it. In dress he was too immaculate for words. His clothes perfectly cut, his hat always just right, and his "bird's-eye" bow tie always in complete agreement with the silk handkerchief so neatly set in his breast pocket.

He lived in South London, and kept a good home, of which he was very proud; servants, too, when circumstances permitted, and however low funds might be he always had enough to run his "ménage" in the proper way.

Earning his living by the "toss" means, as you have probably guessed, that a man is prepared to toss anybody for anything at any time. Many times I saw Sam at his job, but I never discovered why he was so fortunate till I was "put wise" by Sam's accomplice, a man known as "Country Bill."

Never again did I offer to "call" Sam's hand, for I

am sure he never had his equal in cunning and craft at his special game. The coin he used was always a sovereign (he'd find that rather difficult to-day), his lucky " jimmy," as he called it. I noticed that he always carried it in his right-hand trousers pocket, and whenever he indulged in a gamble he was always careful that the last " call " was made to him, and he always won—except when he didn't want to.

I remember one night entering a public-house not many miles from Aldgate pump, where I found " Slippery Sam " and his confederate, " Country Bill," tossing for bottles of whisky, and it was quite obvious that they were trying to draw the proprietor—a Jew, and a very good one—into the swindle. The Jew, who was known as Ike, was a very good man at the toss himself, but apparently he didn't know Sam and his rural friend.

It was not long before Ike was inveigled, and taking on the winner of the last toss, who happened to be " Country Bill," he won.

" Toss him double or quits," said Sam.

Ike did, and winning again, was now four bottles of whisky to the good. Flushed with his success, he now ventured to challenge Sam.

" Do you mean for the lot? " said that worthy casually.

" Yes," said Ike, " and double if you like."

" Right," said Sam, " call to me."

Down went his lucky " jimmy " on the counter, and Ike called and lost, which is not very surprising, for he would have lost whatever he called.

This might have gone on indefinitely, but Ike said it was his last bottle of " Black and White."

" Never mind," said Sam, " port or anything else will do."

" I'm finished," laughed Ike, " but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you half a quid if you'll go down to the ' Live and Let Live ' and do it on old Finklestein." And ever ready to oblige a friend, the two men, taking up their winnings, went off to earn the money.

Ike knew he had been fleeced, but he was a good sport and made no complaint, and later was delighted to learn that Sam had cleared Finklestein out of every bottle of gin he had in the place. He paid up his half quid, too, remarking that it was " cheap at the price."

On another occasion I found Sam and Bill evidently

ripe for mischief at the Swan Hotel in Mansell Street. On a shelf was a small bottle of champagne which had apparently been put aside for a customer who had ordered it, and for some reason or other Sam had set his heart on that bottle of champagne.

"It looks so lonely," said Sam.

"Yes," answered the landlord, "and it's going to stop lonely—it's for Tommy G. (a well-known contractor in the neighbourhood)—it's his birthday." Shortly afterwards the landlord went to lunch, his place being taken by a barman. The man was a newcomer, and this provided Sam with his opportunity.

"Tell the boss Tommy is here," he said to the man suddenly.

Off went the barman, to come back a moment later and hand over the wine to Sam. This worthy, who doubtless had opened a bottle of "fizz" before, untwisted the wire and sent the cork flying with the skill and dexterity of a head-waiter. Calling for two clean glasses, he was in the act of pouring out the wine when in walked Tommy, who called for the champagne he had ordered. This brought the landlord into the bar to find the bottle gone. He immediately turned on Sam, but it was too late, for by now the slippery one and Bill were looking through the bottom of their glasses.

"I could do with another like that," said Sam cheekily.

"But that one wasn't yours, and you haven't paid for it," burst out the landlord.

"There must be a trick in it somewhere," said Sam.

"But I tell you it belonged to this gentleman!"

"So sorry," answered Sam; "if he doesn't mind we'll toss who pays for it."

Tommy always liked to be thought a sport, and agreed, but said, "How about one for me as you've finished that bottle. Will you make it two?"

"Three," said Sam, indicating "Country Bill," "three—I've got a friend with me."

The fun now commenced, and several bottles were consumed, which, I need hardly state, Tommy had to pay for, but Sam was playing for higher stakes now, and he didn't let the wine get the better of him. Outside the door stood the contractor's horse and trap, a really smart turn-out

"Let's go and have a look at your cob," said Sam suddenly, and out they all went.

"Fine bit of horseflesh," observed Sam. "What do you want for him?"

"Wouldn't take less than forty pounds," replied Tommy, who was very full up with champagne.

"Toss you sixty or nothing," said the slippery one.

Up went the sovereign, and the horse had got a new owner.

"No good without the trap and harness," said the "tossler"—"what's that worth?"

"Thirty pounds," said Tommy.

"Sixty or nothing?" And the contractor agreeing, the trap and harness followed the horse.

I thought that that would be the end of it, but there was to be some fun yet.

"You ain't got a whip," said "Country Bill," who had been very quiet up till now.

"Quite right," said Sam, "must have a whip; go and get one, Bill," and away went Bill, to return in a few minutes with a whip which he said had cost him half a guinea. They tossed for it, and Sam, who was not without his sense of humour, let Tommy win. Pathetic though it looked, I couldn't help laughing to see the contractor go home with the whip (he proudly pointed out that he *had won something*) whilst Sam went off with the cob and trap.

The following day I heard that Tommy was out seeking Slippery Sam, because the cob was a great favourite with his wife, so to put matters right at home, he wrote out a cheque for forty pounds for Sam, who returned the whole outfit.

The last time I saw Slippery Sam was at the riverside, the occasion being the race for the sculling championship of the world. The owner of a well-known Thames hostelry was running a boat to follow the race, and as I had a ticket for the boat I turned up at the house, where to my surprise I found "Slippery Sam," "Country Bill," and a few friends, and from his conversation I gathered that the trickster was on business bent.

He had invited his friends to see the race, and though anxious to get some tickets for the boat, he was more anxious still not to have to pay for them, and that boded ill for somebody.

The proprietor had just made it known that there were only eight tickets left, when a party of Australians arrived and asked to purchase them. Sam had been waiting for something like this, and gave the "office" to "Country Bill."

Bill, who had apparently got himself up for the occasion, pushed his way to the front, and exclaimed:

"How about me?—I want some."

"Well, what are we going to do about it?" said the proprietor.

"I'll toss them for it," replied Bill.

The Aussies agreed, and the coins having been put down, they won the tickets.

This was according to arrangement, and Sam, who had kept in the background up till this moment, now pointed out to the landlord that he had been waiting longest, and should have been considered first.

"However," he said, "I don't want to quarrel. I don't know what the tickets are worth to these gentlemen, but whatever it is I'll make it double—that is—if they will toss for it."

Without thinking what they were doing, the Australians consented.

"Call to me," said Sam, placing his lucky sovereign on the table.

"Woman," called one of the Aussies.

"I like a good woman," said the trickster, "but a good head's better." Heads it was.

Sam snatched up the tickets, and was walking off, when the landlord realised that whilst he *had* them nobody had paid for them.

"How about my money?" he asked.

"Nothing to do with me," said the slippery one. "I tossed, and stood the chance of losing; you must settle it between yourselves," and calling his friends, he went off into the boat. I never saw him again.

Sam's method for making sure of "heads I win, tails you lose" was as simple as it was ingenious. He had a wonderfully made "cap" exactly resembling the "head" of a sovereign, which practice had made him able to manipulate at will. The coin accordingly was always "head" uppermost on the table, covering the "tail," and if you called "head" he removed the cap, and vice versa.

CHAPTER XX

" CON " MEN OUT-CONFIDENCED

The " share-pusher " and the " confidence man "—Their haunts and methods
—Giving the " con " man a taste of his own medicine.

THE " share-pusher " or " confidence trick " man was a type of criminal we had little to do with in our district, the City and the West End being their happy hunting grounds.

Your real " con " man can be anything and everything at will—humorist, politician, philosopher—he will be a professional man one day, while the next he will be suavely telling some dupe how he toiled as a ranch hand on an Australian sheep farm and worked himself up till he became the owner of the largest station in the Western Provinces of that great country.

Either settled in England or on holiday here, he devotes the leisure which his great wealth permits him to works of philanthropy, and if you are not anxious to do business he will endeavour to get your money for charity. He is thoroughly acquainted with all the most deserving charities, as well he may be—for has he not given thousands to them all?

Americans and men from the Dominions are his prey, and how these hard-headed business men continually fall for the wiles of the " con " man never ceases to amaze me. Trafalgar Square, St. Paul's, The Abbey, The Tower, and all the show places of historical interest are the resorts of these tricksters. In these public localities they spot with unerring eye the stranger in their midst.

And having made themselves acquainted by their own special methods, who so obliging in every way as your " con " man? He will take you anywhere you want to go, even to the House of Commons itself, where strangely enough he will meet the member of his own constituency in

Palace Yard and introduce you to him. Nothing is too much trouble for him—he exists solely for your pleasure.

Londoners have no need to worry about these gentry, whose safety and immunity from arrest lies in time and distance. It is the traveller abroad that he is after, and before commencing operations he will invariably satisfy himself as to his dupe's address and the date of his departure for home.

Having made his haul he retires into obscurity till his victim is on the high seas, when he will emerge in safety to find other fish to fry. In the absence of a prosecutor the police are helpless.

The following is a true and I hope interesting story of my own meeting with some " con " men soon after my return from my visit to Australia in search of health.

Strolling along the Strand one day I found myself by the windows of Australia House, and mindful of the happy days I had spent in South Australia, I stopped to look at a picture of the beautiful city of Adelaide—the " city of churches," as it is called. My thoughts were suddenly disturbed by a voice at my elbow, and I turned to see a cheery, well set up individual, a complete stranger, smiling at me.

" Great city that," he said.

" It is," I replied.

" Do you know it? " he asked.

" Quite well."

" Do you belong to Australia? "

" Not belong to it, but I've just come from there."

" It's good to meet a man from the Southern Cross," he went on. " Come and have a drink, then perhaps I can show you round."

Leaving it to my newly found friend, I found myself walking towards Charing Cross, where he steered me into a well-known hostelry—famous, as he reminded me, for its colonial associations.

" This is the Irish House," he informed me.

Straight to the bar we went and, after critically surveying its occupants, he carefully warned me against strangers.

" This is the safest saloon about town," he said.

" I've heard of a place called the C. . . . Bar," said I, mentioning another famous house nearby, " it's somewhere around this part."

He looked horrified.

"Take my advice and don't go there," he begged, "they're all 'crimps' and 'bummers.' I was nearly caught there, and if it hadn't been for my friend, one of the chiefs at Scotland Yard, I should have lost all I had. That hat you're wearing gives you away," he added. "Get rid of it."

At the moment a big, hefty man approached us and with a smiling "Hallo" that attracted the attention of everybody in the bar, remarked:

"Who have you got from Home?"

Up to this time no names had been mentioned, but I was now introduced to the new-comer by my first acquaintance.

"Meet a real colonial," he said, "one who knows Australia from Fremantle across to N.S.W.—Jack McCarthy. I haven't the pleasure of your name yet," he added.

I gave him my correct name and we were soon in conversation on matters generally regarding different parts of Australia. My newly made friends were generosity itself, and would on no account allow me to pay for a drink, the first one even suggesting I should lunch with him. Mr. McCarthy, being a very busy man, had to rush away, and with an invitation to his home and other places, he waved a farewell and disappeared.

"I don't know your name yet," I said to No. 1.

"Of course not," he replied. "How sorry I am. Sure, it's another good old Irish one—Paddy Brian, and if you ever get away round Wagga Wagga you'll find it's known in every hotel. When I've cleared up things here, I'm away out there again. Here's 'how' and I'm right glad to meet you."

A move to another house was then suggested and we were just about to go when Mr. Brian ejaculated:

"Well, well, if there isn't old Casey. What's he doing here, I wonder?"

A man, quite the agriculturist in appearance, had entered and made straight for us.

"Never thought we should meet again," said Brian.

Up to this point I really thought my new friends *were* colonials and that our meeting had been quite fortuitous, but it was now evident that the latest arrival had been prompted by the Mr. McCarthy who had just left, for

after he had been introduced he started exactly where that individual had left off.

I had said I knew all parts of the Commonwealth except Queensland, never having been much above Newcastle, N.S.W., and Mr. Casey was very careful to keep all his conversation well within the part of Australia with which I was unfamiliar.

In the old days in the Force I had had something to do with “ confidence men,” though my work had chiefly been to make inquiries regarding their victims, and realising that I had fallen into a real nest of them I thought what a splendid opportunity it would be to play them at their own game. They are said to be dangerous men who stop at nothing to gain their object, but I wasn’t going to let that deter me.

Casey was already putting over the gold mine stuff and the thousands of pounds he would clear through the investments he was making.

“ Why not let our friend into the secret? ” he said to Brian.

I indicated how much this would please me, but hastened to add that, although I was not prepared to deal in thousands at the moment, if they were prepared to consider something in hundreds I might be inclined to do business.

“ Bless me,” said the open-hearted Casey, “ if you’re a friend of Paddy’s, I’ll do anything. Of course, you’ll remember that the whole thing is in confidence,” he added; “ once the public get to know of it, it’ll give the whole show away and there’ll be such a rush that I’ll be suspected of having given information.”

Having assured them of my silence and my confidence in them, they professed themselves willing to accept £500, this amount to be produced the following morning when I was to meet them at a well-known Strand hotel. With all his good wishes Mr. Casey took his departure, reminding me before he went that there was no time to lose since next week the good things would be on the open market and it would be too late.

I was now left alone again with Mr. Brian, who particularly impressed on me the importance and the urgency of to-morrow’s meeting.

“ I’m not supposed to tell you,” he whispered, “ but

I'm having two thousand in it because I know that if Casey says it's the 'goods,' it is the 'goods.' "

"If you want to sell in a few months' time you can bet they'll be worth double the money."

Making our way to Trafalgar Square, we were passed by two smartly dressed men, to whom Brian with a friendly gesture lifted his hat and wished "Good afternoon."

"Guess you wonder who they are," he said. "Well, the tall one is the chief at the 'Yard,' and the other the greatest detective in the country. I'll take you along there one day—it will be well worth a visit."

I felt it really would be if it was only for the purpose of meeting two such men as a chief of the "Yard," whom I apparently must have overlooked, together with the greatest detective in the country, whom I also in some unaccountable way had always missed.

Mr. Brian now referred again to my hat and, having inquired my size, nothing would satisfy him until he had bought me a new one, and since I hadn't the heart to disappoint him I allowed him to take me into a fashionable hatters in Piccadilly, where he fixed me up with a new bowler which cost him a guinea.

He accompanied me to the foot of Westminster Bridge and saw me on to a bus for Streatham, at which place—so I told him—I lived.

Relieved of their company, I now fixed up my plan for the next day, which in the event of it being successful meant that my new friends and I would go to Scotland Yard together much sooner than they anticipated.

Calling at my bank I obtained twenty five-pound bank-notes, and having placed them lengthways in a long envelope I made my way to the meeting-place near Charing Cross. Brian and Casey were both on time and greeted me with a cheery "Good morning."

"How about a spot of lunch?" said Brian.

"Too soon for food," chimed in Casey, "but I'd like a drink with a real kick in it."

"I'm with you," said Brian. "We can have a drink, lunch, and talk business all at the same show."

We made for a well-known Strand hotel, and having made ourselves comfortable, Casey, after a careful look round, pulled a bundle of notes from his pocket and asked me to guess at the number in the wad. I told him that

never having kept so many outside my bank I had no idea. Brian took the notes and counted exactly five hundred.

“ That’s the amount I’m going to put into the concern,” said Casey.

“ I think I made it clear that all I can spare at the moment is £100,” I said.

“ You’ll be sorry later,” answered Casey, “ but so long as you keep our secret everything’s O.K. and I’ll do you another good turn some other time.”

I was anxious to get a closer look at their notes, for while there was no doubt at all that the top one was a genuine Bank of England “ fiver,” there was a very great doubt indeed about the rest.

However, it was now my turn to show confidence, so I very ostentatiously counted out my twenty “ fivers ” and then, replacing them in the envelope, put it in my breast-pocket.

After some more drinks we went into the restaurant for lunch, and whilst eating I asked where I was being taken to pay in my money. Both men pretended to be startled, saying they were afraid the people wouldn’t take it from me, and that I should have to put my trust in them.

“ Talk it over,” I suggested, “ and see if you can arrange for me to come along with you, or, if not, leave Brian here with your bundle while you go and secure my shares with mine.”

They went over to a corner table and discussed the matter, and then smilingly returned.

“ We have talked it over,” said Casey, “ and arranged that Brian shall take your envelope as far as the place and you shall take mine. Then I will take both lots in while you wait until I come back with the receipts.”

“ Good,” I answered, “ that’ll suit me. Now I’ll put my initials on my envelope, whilst you make your notes into a parcel and initial that, too. By the way,” I added, “ I wonder if you’d mind counting yours again.”

The bundles were produced again, and Casey, without removing the rubber band, carefully turned each note back at the corner in such a way that the inexperienced observer would detect nothing spurious; but my trained eyes were able to note that while the top and bottom notes were genuine “ fivers,” all the remaining were Bank of

Engraving articles, which are almost exact counterparts of Bank of England notes with the exception of the word "Engraving."

I now sealed my envelope, initialed it, and handed it to Brian on the strict understanding that it was not to be opened till we reached our destination, and the worthy Casey followed suit by initialing his bundle and handing it to me. Lunch and all drinks having been paid for by my philanthropic friends, we started for the place, which they told me was on the river-side.

Where we were actually making for I never knew, but of course it was a building with suitable exits back and front, through one of which they would decamp, whilst I—poor fool—would wait at the other till a policeman came.

But we never reached the place. As we passed the entrance to Scotland Yard I turned to them and said:

"Now you're coming in here with me, and I'll introduce *you* to the Chief."

With one look at the "Yard" and another at me, they were off like hares, Casey in his eagerness to get away colliding with an old woman and falling, but picking himself up rushed after his friend without even stopping to retrieve his perfectly good hat which he lost in the collision.

To stop them was impossible, and I never saw them again. I should like to have seen their faces when they opened the envelope I had so carefully initialed. It was full of tissue paper. I had provided myself with two envelopes at the bank, and had quietly changed them over when putting them in my breast pocket.

In exchange for my tissue paper I had received a lunch, many drinks, an extremely good hat, a bundle of "dud" notes, and two perfectly genuine "fivers." The last, of course, they can have back when—well, when they come and ask me for them.

CHAPTER XXI

FROM C.I.D TO PRIVATE DETECTIVE

My first case—I realise I am no longer in the C I D —A very bad eye—I make a success of things

RENDERED completely unfit through the injuries I received at Sidney Street for further duty as a police officer, and having to live on a sum much below the wages of a constable (which was not conducive to my restoration to health), I found what I believed to be suitable employment as a private detective, or, as it is more frequently described *and* maligned, as a private inquiry agent.

The firm whose employment I entered was of very good repute, and is now, I believe, the oldest and most important in the country. Anyhow, I can vouch for its reliability, which means a great deal in the present-day conditions of the so-called "confidential investigators." What I know concerning these gentry would fill volumes, but that, as Kipling says, is another story.

Comparisons are always odious, and as between official Criminal Investigation and private inquiry work, more so than usual, but until I set out on my first inquiry I had no conception of the difficulties with which I would have to contend.

My first job was a compensation case, in which a man was claiming for the loss of sight of an eye, occasioned by an injury received during his employment. A large pile of papers which had apparently been well handled was all I had to guide me, and I learned from these that the man was a farm bailiff, and that he had received his injury in a most peculiar way.

Whilst removing a stone from a horse's hoof the animal's tail had flicked him in the eye, and though he only complained at first of inflammation it was subsequently discovered that the sight of the eye had been destroyed.

Reading the reports through very carefully, it seemed to me that everything possible had already been done, for the claim had been investigated by the insurance company's claims assessor, a man with all the tricks of the trade at his finger's end, and who was not likely to pass a fraudulent claim. However, "mine not to argue why," and I thought that if I couldn't do anything I would at least leave the case that nobody else could.

The place of inquiry was a small village a few miles from the town of Northampton, and I decided to commence my investigations on the spot. With a fair knowledge of the district, I arrived one midday and made for the village inn, that invariable hot-bed of local gossip. I was very careful not to discuss my business, but mine host, while professing to be anything but inquisitive, was more than anxious to learn the object of my visit.

Accordingly, I told him I was the advance agent for a big agricultural concern, which pleased him immensely. I told him that the information I had given him was in complete confidence, and though he assured me he would regard it as such and respect it, the very first person I met on going out next morning applied for a job as herdsman.

I made my way to the farm, and there found the bailiff in the very barn where he had met with his alleged injury. He had heard of me, and knew I was staying at the village inn. I was just starting to try and be friendly when he pulled me up short with the question:

"What are you, and what are you doing here?"

"What are you!" The three words immediately came right home to me. No longer could I say I was a C.I.D. man from the "Yard," and at that moment the man I was so anxious to question could call the village constable and have me removed from the premises. Believe me, the realisation of my altered status did not cheer me up. However, this was no time for vain reflections.

"What am I?" I answered. "Well, what do I look like, and what do you think I want?"

"I don't know," said the man, "but you look more like a 'tec than an agricultural traveller, and anyway you don't belong about here."

This wasn't an encouraging start, but there was something about the man's manner of speaking that attracted my attention, and having made a very careful study of

dialects, which had been useful to me on many occasions when dealing with provincial thieves, I answered:

"No, I don't really belong here—neither do you."

This drew him out a little, and though he avoided any reference to his actual birthplace, I was sure it was on the East Coast, for in addition to his Suffolk brogue he had inadvertently dropped the name of a large estate a few miles from Felixstowe.

Nothing was said regarding his injury, and except for a kind of stigma, slightly noticeable in one eye, there was no apparent evidence of loss of sight, and during that short interview I became convinced that either the man had not lost the sight of the eye or, if he had, it was a loss of long standing.

Without pressing inquiry in the neighbourhood, I returned to London, since I knew I would get no useful corroboration of my suspicions, since all the witnesses and the man's employer were convinced of the validity of the claim.

First satisfying myself that the man's name—a very uncommon one—was correct, I went to Somerset House, and tracing the family to a small hamlet a few miles from Ipswich, I proceeded there. This time, after a visit to the village "pump," and being informed that the vicar was a very good sort and well acquainted with his flock, I sought the assistance of the reverend gentleman.

I was now a colonial desirous of tracing the whole of a family who it was believed formerly lived in his parish. I very nearly came to grief with this story, for the good gentleman had not only been to this particular colony, but had relations there and was consequently very much more conversant with it than I.

However, I managed to avoid the pitfalls and got from him the address of several members of the family, whose name, of course, he knew. He told me that the schoolmaster might give me better information about the male members, and so with the vicar's introduction I called on that worthy, who took me back through his register some forty years.

Long before the end I had seen the name I wanted, but in order to allay suspicion I let him ramble on for a bit and then went back asking a question about this member

and that, until I gradually led him to the one I was interested in.

"Is he still in the parish?" I asked.

"Oh no," was the reply. "I knew him well as a lad. He left home on the death of his father and went to London, going from there, so I believe, to the North."

"Did he do any work here of any kind?" was my next query.

"Well, yes," said the schoolmaster, "he worked at the mill for a time, but lost the sight of an eye in a poaching affair. Of course, he wasn't a poacher, but the keepers on the estate made it unpleasant for him and he cleared off."

In the words of the children's game, I was "getting hot."

"Wasn't the loss a drawback to him in any way?"

"No," went on my informant, "he went back to the mill, but the miller was never satisfied and had, I think, something to do with the lad leaving the village."

Thanking him, I paid a brief visit to the mill, where I received confirmation of the master's story.

Returning to the inn, I found the proprietor anxious to talk. He knew even more about the matter than the schoolmaster and well remembered the affair with the keepers, whom he blamed for the injury to the man's eye, saying it would never have happened but for them.

Back in London, where my report came as an agreeable shock to the insurance company and their medical authority, it was agreed that I should pay another visit to the district where the claim originated.

Since my previous visit I evidently had been the subject of much gossip at the inn, and the proprietor was anxious to learn something more about the agricultural show I had promised. This was all very useful, for quite a number of people, including the farm bailiff himself, came along as the news got round that I was there.

The bailiff was eager to talk, and with the information I had garnered I got him right back to his native village. I told him that I had lived there for a time, and mentioned the names of the vicar and schoolmaster. He was so interested that he fell right into it, and when I suddenly asked him if he hadn't worked at Mr. Rutter's mill, he answered "Yes."

"From what I recollect," I said, "you got into some sort of a scrape with the keepers up at the estate."

"Yes," he answered, "it was silly of me to leave the old place for that, but I could never forgive them and, as we quarrelled every time we met, I thought it better to clear out. I always wanted to join the old 'Suffolks,' but my eye prevented me passing the doctor."

"Isn't it remarkable that nobody here ever noticed your eye?" I queried.

"Yes," he said, "but I'll let you into a secret. I had an accident a little time ago and when I saw the doctor he said he believed I was blind in that eye. I could have told him that, for it was old news, but I had never said anything about it to anyone down here and I didn't 'let on' to him."

The cat was out of the bag with a vengeance, and though I felt rather sorry for him, his visions of a £200 compensation vanished into thin air and my first private case came to a successful conclusion.

L'ENVOI

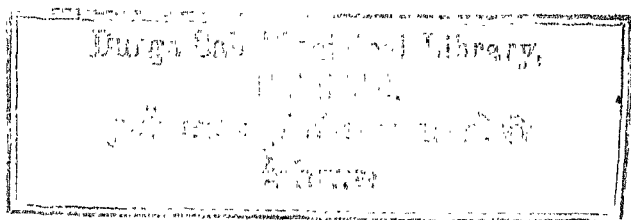
HAD I my time over again I would not chose a different career. It is not that I am in any way conceited about my work in the Force, but simply because the job suited me and I enjoyed every hour of it.

Looking back over half a century I would be foolish to say that life has been all honey. I have had my ups and downs, but even the "downs" had their amusing side.

My advice to young men is: *Keep fit, don't go to extremes and, above all, try to wear a smile.* If you meet your friends looking as though you have the troubles of the world on your shoulders, they'll cross over to the other side of the road. Don't be slow to accept what is yours by right. I once gave my promotion to another and got badly "left."

I learned my wisdom too late.

For many of my most interesting experiences I have not been able to find room in this volume. One of these days I hope to tell them to you. *Au revoir.*



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